

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1896.

THE MISTRESS OF BRAE FARM.

BY ROSA NOUCHETTE CAREY.

CHAPTER LI.

"THERE IS ALWAYS LIGHT."

THERE are hours in one's life—but thank God they are rare—when the furnace of affliction seems heated seven-fold; and such an hour had come to Ellison, when the door closed upon Gavin, and she was left alone.

Yes, he was gone, her well-beloved. The moment before he had been standing opposite to her, with a dumb pleading for forgiveness in his deep-set eyes, but she had sent him from her. Now the awful silence and blankness seemed to crush her, and a choking sob broke from her lips; she sank down on the couch, feeling that all strength had deserted her.

Many years afterwards, when peace had returned to her, she said to one who loved her greatly: "I knew then what it meant to long for death; life without Gavin's love seemed to me the abomination of desolation. God forgive me my want of faith, for I know better now; but when the iron enters a woman's soul, as it entered mine that day, and I saw the desire of my eyes taken from me at a single stroke, the anguish seemed greater than I could bear."

And yet, though the fiery blast of disappointed love seemed to scorch her through and through, there was no anger in her faithful heart against the two who had wronged her. "Gavin was not to blame, or Lorraine either, it was Kismet, fate; the cloudy veil that had suddenly overshadowed them, and had obscured her heaven of content, had been drawn by some sorrowful angel."

But the ordeal was a bitter one, and for some time Ellison shrank from the awful cup of suffering that was held to her lips.

Was it for this that he had taught her to love him, that he had stirred her calm nature to its very depths! She had never wished to love or marry; Gavin's friendship had completely satisfied her; but now—now—he had won her, and her tardy love burnt with the purest and most ardent flame. "No woman, not even Lorraine, could love him better," she said to herself as she paced the room with rapid uneven steps; "but Lorraine must not have him, he is mine—mine—he has pledged his word, and I know him too well. Gavin, my Gavin, will never be disloyal to me."

And again—and now her face was pallid with misery—"It was my own miserable blindness? Why was I so eager to bring them together? If I had not gone to Switzerland Lorraine would not have learnt to depend on him so utterly. Oh, I can see it all; there is no need for either of them to tell me anything; it was Gavin's good heart, his very tenderness of nature, that led him into danger. Lorraine's sorrow, her very helplessness, would appeal to him too forcibly; and then there is a charm about her—something indescribable—that would be fatal to a man like Gavin; and I, fool that I was, left him to be tempted all those months." A heart-broken sigh escaped from her lips. "But I will not reproach him," she went on; "but for this wretched man I should never have known of all this trouble: no, I cannot, I will not give him up; Gavin would not wish it, he is very proud, and he has pledged his faith to me. There are some things too hard for flesh and blood to bear; I could do anything but this; I will be patient, very, very patient with him, and he will love me yet."

And so the battle raged on, until Ellison's very soul was sick with misery. Hours had passed, and all the household was sleeping peacefully, but no rest was possible to her; rest, when she was stretched on this rack of anguish, when all her woman's kingdom was in utter chaos! "O God, that women are made so!" was her inward cry, as it had been Lorraine's; "that they must suffer like this."

Once, as she paced the room restlessly, a step on the gravel-path outside her window made her shiver with sudden apprehension. She knew whose step that was; surely he was not so mad as to think she would admit him at this hour, for it was long past midnight. The next moment there was a quiet tap, and then she heard the gate close again; and as she peeped through the blind cautiously, she saw something white lying on the window ledge; but it was some minutes before she could summon up courage to open the window and take up the packet.

He had written to her. "Poor Gavin, he had found it impossible to rest too." And then she sat down and opened his letter.

"MY OWN DEAR ELLISON (it began)—I am writing to you to-night, because there is much that I must say to you, and much that you ought to hear; but this evening I was too utterly abashed to speak.

How is a man to defend himself when a woman looks at him as you looked at me, Ellison? If I could have been base enough to tell you a lie, that lie would have seemed white to me at that moment. I am a guilty man, for I have suffered another woman to usurp your rightful place in my heart; but that is the whole sum and substance of my guilt. Oh, my dear, why did you go away? Did I not warn you that you were making a mistake? If you had stayed, all this mischief would not have happened, for I was true to you then, absolutely and entirely true. Let me explain myself more fully—I will be perfectly frank with you; but for that miserable fellow Bates I should have guarded my secret safely to the end, and you would not have had to suffer so cruelly. You are a proud woman, Ellison, and you have been bitterly humiliated to-night; but if my life-long service can efface the memory of that shameful hour, you will forget it yet. My one desire, my one prayer is that you will be merciful, and suffer me to atone for the wrong I have unwittingly done you.

"I cannot tell you when I began to care too much for Mrs. Herbert. I think from the first she had a singular attraction for me; somehow at times she reminded me of my darling Nell, and yet they were not in the least alike. But I should never have succumbed to her fascinations but for the accident. You were far away, my Ellison, and I had to take your place in ministering to her; no man with a heart could have seen any creature so utterly crushed and heart-broken, and not have tried to comfort her. I need say no more. You know me well enough to be sure that I should not weakly succumb to such a misfortune; with the exception of those few moments, when in my terror I lost all self-mastery, I have been perfectly true to you in word and deed. Shall I tell you what she said to me that night? 'There is nothing to forgive; it is not your fault, it is a great misfortune, a sad trouble, that has overtaken us both,' and she was right. That is what I want to impress upon you, that it is just a trouble that we must bear together; for you will be patient with me, Ellison, will you not, until I can pull myself together? You will not regret your forbearance, I can promise you that; for no wife shall be more loved and honoured. There is only one thing I must ask you to arrange, that Mrs. Herbert shall remain away until after our marriage. Why need we embarrass ourselves unnecessarily? when we meet she will have taken her rightful place, as Muriel's companion and friend. You know now, my dear one, why I did not wish her to live at Brae Farm.

"Now I will end this letter. When I see you to-morrow you will not shrink from me again, will you? Dear, you hardly knew how acutely you pained me then. With all my faults I am still your betrothed; in a few weeks I shall be your husband. Remember that you are very dear to me, and always will be.—
Yours now and for ever.

"GAVIN."

Ah, the tears were falling now! As she finished the letter she buried her face in her hands and wept long and bitterly. Yes, she was dear to him she knew that well; but what prospect of happiness could there be for either of them, when this shadow lay between them? "You now know why I did not wish her to live at Brae Farm." But was not the Dower-House too near for a favoured rival? "God help us all, for I do not know what to do!" she cried aloud; but no other prayer rose to her lips that night; yet in her dumb anguish she had never prayed so well. Just as the day was breaking, she went to her writing-table and wrote a few hurried words.

"I have read your letter, Gavin; it is like yourself. Do you think there is any danger of my misunderstanding you? never—never—I can trust you utterly. A man is not always master of his own heart; and, dear, though you have loved me well, you have never loved me enough. Why did you ever think of marrying me? That is the one great mistake that you have made. But I am not going to reproach you; you are far too dear to me for that; but I must ask you a great favour. Do not come to me to-morrow (I ought to say to-day, for the day is dawning) you must give me time to get over all this. I could not speak to you with calmness, and a scene would be abhorrent to us both. I know you will be vexed that I say this, but I have a right to some little consideration. You have called me proud, and you are right; but I have never been proud with you; even now I am asking you most humbly to do me this favour. Leave me alone for a day or two, and when I have recovered my calmness I will send for you.—Yours lovingly and sorrowfully,

"ELLISON."

Ellison's will was strong, but Gavin's was equally so. When he read these last words his face became as iron, and he muttered between his teeth: "No, by heaven, I will not do this thing! She shall see me, and I will make her listen to reason." And as soon as he had eaten his breakfast he went down to the Farm.

He walked into the sitting-room as usual, but the young mistress of Brae Farm was not at her bureau; then he rang the bell, and Ruth looked at him in some surprise as he questioned her.

"Her mistress had gone up to town by the early train for some shopping," she said, and she was not expected home for a day or two. No, she had not left her address; but she supposed she had gone to Portman Square as usual. Her mistress had been very hurried, and looked far from well. She had read her letters, and then sent Dorcas to pack her bag.

"And she left no message for me? Perhaps there is a note somewhere."

"No, sir; but my mistress did say, that if you called I was to tell you that she had gone to town on business. I daresay you will hear

from her by the last post." But to this Gavin made no answer; his brow was black with anger as he walked through the farmyard. She had gone to town to avoid an interview with him; and he knew well that she had not taken refuge at the Mervyns'. It was no use his following her; it was not likely that he would be able to find her. She had gone to some out-of-the-way hotel or lodging, and probably the Mervyns would not know she was even in town.

For the first time in his life he felt desperately angry with her. She had condemned him to days of misery, knowing all the time how he would chafe at her absence. She could trust him utterly, and yet treat him in this heartless way, and that after a frank and manly confession. "My one desire, my one prayer is that you will be merciful and suffer me to atone for the wrong I have unwittingly done you," had been his words, and he had written them out of the fulness of his heart. In spite of his infatuation for the young widow, he did desire to do his duty to his betrothed; no idea of shirking his engagement entered his head for a moment; but as he walked back through the long meadow the thought of Ellison's sorrowful indignation struck chill to his heart. In spite of her letter he felt that only displeasure could have driven her to take such a decided step. She never acted from impulse, her nature was too evenly balanced for that; but for the first time he realised that he might have difficulty with her; at least she had found a way to punish him effectually.

Muriel felt vaguely that there was something amiss. Gavin was so silent at meals, and so very unapproachable. He was out all day, and he spent his evenings shut up in his study; even when Mr. Vincent dined with them, he made some excuse about answering some business letters, and left his sister to entertain their guest.

Five days passed, and each morning Gavin glanced anxiously at his letters, but no envelope bore Ellison's handwriting. At last, when a week had elapsed, he saw a tiny triangular note lying on his plate. "Dear Gavin, will you come to me this afternoon? I shall tell Ruth to admit no one else.—Yours, affectionately, ELLISON." Nothing more; not a word of extenuation and apology. Gavin was so moody during breakfast that morning that Muriel hardly dared to accost him; he scarcely glanced at the rest of his letters, and ate and drank mechanically. All the morning he tramped about the place, finding fault with the workmen who were making some alterations in the stables.

"I wonder what has put out the Colonel," observed one of them to the under-groom. "He is generally as pleasant-spoken as can be; but this morning he is just ramping about the place like a bear with a sore head."

As soon as luncheon was over he walked down to the Farm. He meant to speak plainly to Ellison, and to tell her that she had treated him badly. He would take a high hand with her; he was in

that sore, touchy state when even a scene would have acted as a safety-valve. A week ago he would have humbled himself before her, and would have stooped to the most abject entreaties, but now he would stand on his rights.

There was an aggressive stiffness in his manner as he entered the sitting-room; but Ellison, who was writing at her bureau, rose at once and came quickly towards him, holding out both her hands.

"Gavin, are you very angry with me?" she said, looking him full in the face; "are you going to tell me that I have behaved badly? Dear, you must forgive me, for I could not help running away."

"I would not have treated you so," he returned rather bitterly. Then she sighed heavily, and her hands fell from his. He had not offered to kiss her, and there was no attempt to take her in his arms; only as he stood looking at her with that moody displeasure in his eyes, he asked himself what the change in her could mean. She was very calm, with a sort of forced calmness that struck him as unnatural, and she looked years older, as though some blight had passed over her; but she was not ill, only a shade under her eyes spoke of broken rest.

"Gavin," she said gently, "we will have our talk now; I could not have spoken to you before, it was necessary to think over things and make up my mind; somehow," looking at him with strange earnestness, "even in one's worst troubles there is always light, if one waits a little and prays for it. At first I could not see the right path, something seemed to blur my vision, but I have found it now."

"Then we will walk in it together," he returned quickly; "your path and mine are the same."

"No, dear, I think not." And then, as she rested her head on his arm, with a mute caress, he saw that her betrothal ring was not in its usual place, and his face hardened again. "Gavin, I am not angry. I have never been angry for a moment since you told me that; and I love you as dearly as ever, but I cannot marry you. Nothing on earth would induce me to do so." Then, as she pressed upon him gently, he almost flung her from him.

"Ellison, you dare to tell me this to my face! But there are two persons to make a bargain. I mean to keep you to your word. I will not allow you to jilt me."

"Oh, Gavin, what a word!" and Ellison's face grew crimson; but she held her fair head higher than ever. "You are exceedingly angry or you would not say such things to your best friend. If I loved you less—if I did not prefer your happiness before my own—should I be asking you now to give me back my freedom?"

"I do not know. I am only certain of one thing—that you are treating me shamefully. What have I done that you should put me to such cruel humiliation? Do you not understand that my one longing is to atone to you by a lifetime of love and service?"

"Yes, Gavin, I understand that well. You are so good and noble

that I could trust my future to you without any misgiving. As far as you are concerned, I have nothing to dread."

"Do you mean that you distrust Mrs. Herbert, Ellison? Do you know what you are saying? That woman has the soul of an angel. She would bear martyrdom sooner than give you a moment of uneasiness."

"Neither do I distrust Lorraine," but she grew a little pale as the name passed her lips. "Dear Gavin, it is only myself that I fear. Are you sure that you understand my nature? I am less demonstrative than most women, and I am slow to love. Even you, Gavin," looking at him with wistful tenderness, "found me difficult to win; but there is one thing I know, that the man I marry must give me his whole heart, or he could not make me happy." Then she saw him wince, and the hard, proud expression on his face changed to one of pain.

"That went straight," he muttered. "You had me there, Ellison; but surely you have generosity enough to forgive my wavering in my allegiance. If you could only read my heart, my one wish is to marry you to-morrow."

A stifled sigh broke from her lips. He was pressing her hard, but no yielding was possible to her. She knew now that no wretchedness would equal the misery of marrying him with the shadow of another woman for ever between them. The fierce jealousy that burnt in her veins at the mere thought told her that it would be too dangerous an experiment.

If she yielded to him—if she ever consented to bear the sacred name of wife—she knew that Lorraine could never enter their house—that even the bare fact of Gavin speaking to her in ordinary civility would drive her almost to madness. "At least I know I could not bear that," she had said to herself more than once. But how was she to convince him. Gavin was so obstinate, so tenacious of his opinions; his idea of honour called upon him to sacrifice himself and Lorraine; no other course would seem possible to him.

"Dear, let me put on that ring again," he whispered with insinuating gentleness; but she shook her head.

"No, Gavin, never. In my turn I must say that I will not allow you to inflict such humiliation on me. I have told you before, and I tell you again, that your one great mistake was ever asking me to marry you. Why did you, dear? We were so happy in our friendship. I was so utterly contented; but you have taught me many things, Gavin, and amongst them, that even the tenderest, truest friendship will not make a happy marriage. I am your friend still"—oh, the love in her eyes as she said this—"to my dying day I will keep that title of honour, but when you marry—Lorraine, not I, must be your wife—the woman you love, and who loves you—" and then she left him and sat down, as some sudden weakness assailed her; and Gavin, leaning against the mantelpiece, buried his face in his hands.

What had she left him to say? Did not his conscience convict him? He knew that it was the truth, and that he had never loved her. One hair of Lorraine's head was dearer to him than all Ellison's fair comeliness; the thought of a caress from her even at this moment turned him giddy; and however he might refuse to own it, Ellison's proud, pure womanliness and utter unselfishness were saving them from a great mistake.

CHAPTER LII.

ROYAL ARMS, CROES-FFORD.

ANOTHER half-hour passed, and then they parted; but Ellison had her way—Gavin had given her back her freedom.

He had not yielded without a final protest. There had been a long and painful silence between them, and then he had placed himself beside her.

"Let us talk of it calmly and dispassionately," he said. "You have not looked yet at my side of the question," and then he pointed out to her the painful position in which her refusal to carry out their engagement would place him. "You are punishing me most unmercifully," he went on. "What have I done that you should condemn me to a single life; for how could I ever bring another woman to Brae as my wife?" but she shook her head sadly at this sophistry.

"I do not ask you to marry yet," she said quietly. "I know that for my sake you will wait a little. It will take time to get used to our changed position. If I dared ask another favour, Gavin, it would be that you would go away for a month or two; it would make things easier for me; and then when you come back you will find the old Ellison ready to welcome you."

Then he looked at her almost indignantly.

"I am to go away and leave you to bear the brunt of everything. Do you think that likely, Ellison?"

"I think it would be wiser," she returned gently. "Gavin, I have thought it all out, and there will not be anything to bear. When you go home you must speak to Muriel; tell her everything, it will be safe with her; and then ask her to speak to Mrs. Earnshaw. There is no need to satisfy our neighbours' curiosity. I have broken off my engagement; that is all. Mrs. Earnshaw is a sensible woman; she will know what to say. Before Sunday all Highlands and Bramley and Dorchester will know, and there will be a nine days' wonder; but it will not affect me," and she lifted her head a little proudly.

"You really wish me to go away?"

"Oh, if you would," and for the first time her lip quivered; "it

would be the truest kindness, Gavin. Why do you not go to Holland as you once planned? I shall not be alone. Muriel will be at Brae." Then he looked at her very keenly, and a smothered sigh burst from him. There was something to him almost superhuman in her calmness. Did she not remember that he had suggested the forest of Ardennes and Holland as their wedding trip?

"Yes, I will go," he returned slowly; "I have no right to make things harder for you. Ellison, you are stronger than I, after all."

"It is not that," she answered in a low tone; but she said no more. Did he not know that his happiness and his well-being were her first thought? It would be better for him, as well as for her, that he should go away until things should be less strained between them. Just now the pain was too acute; neither of them could have borne to meet constantly.

Gavin had relapsed into embarrassed silence again; he dare not ask if Mrs. Herbert would return to the Farm; but Ellison answered his unspoken question of her own accord.

"I mean to see Lorraine soon," she said by-and-by; "it will be easier to talk to her than to write; but I shall beg her to remain at Nefydd Madoc for the present. You will not mind that—will you, Gavin?"

"Do you think I have a right to object to anything that you do?" he asked a little bitterly; but the sorrowful tenderness in her eyes disarmed him.

"You are so good; I know you would bear anything sooner than give me pain; but I mean to be generous too. Lorraine shall not stay away long. When I am ready for her I will tell you so, and then you shall fetch her. I mean to say this to her when we meet."

"Ellison, you shall do nothing of the kind," rousing up at this. "Do you suppose that I will allow you to heap coals of fire on my head in this fashion?"

"How are you to prevent it?" with a sad smile. "But, Gavin, dear friend, I think we have talked long enough. Now, will you forgive me if I send you away again?" And then as he saw the look of utter exhaustion on her face, he was ready to curse himself for the sorrow he had brought on her; in spite of her self-command and calmness, he knew that her heart was almost broken, and the thought was torture to him.

He took her hands between his, and pressed them in mute reverence, but he dared not venture on a caress; but to his surprise she suddenly released them, and threw her arms round his neck.

"Will you kiss me once more, Gavin?" she said with exquisite tenderness in her voice, and as he stooped over her there were tears in his eyes. Why—why could he not have loved this woman as she deserved to be loved? Why had fate been so cruelly hard? If

Lorraine had not come between them he would have married her, and his friendship would have developed in time into something warmer. Even at this final moment he would have prayed her to reconsider her decision ; but he knew her proud, truthful nature would never accept any compromise.

The woman's generosity had triumphed, and the sacrifice had been consummated. Two days later Colonel Trevor started for London *en route* for Greece. He was in no mood for Holland ; the very idea was abhorrent to him. He had long wished to visit modern Athens, and he thought he might possibly extend his trip to Sicily, and even to Constantinople ; he had an old friend living at Palermo, and he had long promised to pay him a visit.

And Ellison remained to take up her changed and marred life as best she could. It was the saddest spring she had ever known, not even her father's death had left her so utterly blank and purposeless. For the first time nature refused to sympathise with her. The budding beauties of hedge-rows and garden borders, the joyous songs of mating birds preparing their nests, the delicious trills of the thrushes and nightingales in the Woodlands only added to her numb anguish ; for her, in all this wide world of living, sentient human beings, there was no mate ; and God's purposes, and the meaning of life, and the mystery of pain so seemingly useless, weighed on her with a sense of doubt that was positive torture. Again and again, on balmy evenings, or in the cold serene moonlight, as she walked to and fro with her faithful Bairn, in the attempt to ease her restlessness, the same speech rose to her lips—"O God, that women are made so, that they should suffer like this !"

It was a cruel ordeal, and even Ellison's strong vitality suffered under it, and for a few days she was obliged to give up the contest and own herself ill ; but she did not long indulge in the luxury of remaining in her own room. When Muriel paid her first visit she was sitting at her bureau as usual, looking over Sam Brattle's accounts, and looking wretchedly pinched and worn. Muriel could not speak. But as Ellison looked at her with an attempt at a smile, the girl suddenly burst into tears.

"Don't, dear Muriel," was all Ellison said ; "we must make the best of a bad business," and that was all that ever passed between them.

To Ellison's strong, reticent nature no expression of pain was a relief ; she neither craved for nor desired sympathy. Could any sympathy give her back her love, her lost delight, the paradise that she had forfeited ? It was Gavin whom she wanted, and for whom she suffered these pangs of heart-sickness ; but indeed no words could express the bitter aridity of Ellison's soul during these first few weeks.

Lorraine felt a little puzzled. Ellison had never written so seldom ; her letters were mere notes, and told her nothing. She had been to

town, and was very busy ; Lorraine must forgive her long silence. There was no mention of Gavin, no allusion to her trousseau ; a scrap of local gossip, and an affectionate inquiry after her health completed her letter.

Muriel was equally reticent. The Dower-House was now ready for occupation, and a care-taker had been put in, and the garden was being altered ; but Muriel wrote as though she had lost all interest in it. "It is so stupid doing things all alone," she wrote ; "and, as you know, Gavin is away." This last clause in Muriel's letter made her vaguely uneasy. Why had not Ellison mentioned that Colonel Trevor was away ? There were only five weeks to the wedding, and it seemed a little strange that he should absent himself. To judge by the tone of Ellison's and Muriel's letters, things seemed rather at a stand-still ; neither of them had alluded to her protracted absence ; there were no pressing entreaties for her return ; and Lorraine's uneasiness increased.

One morning she was unusually absent ; she had been watching Miss Bretherton sort out the contents of the post-bag, but there was no letter with the Highlands post-mark on it, and she felt a keen sense of disappointment. It was ten days since Ellison's last hurried letter had reached her, and she could hardly credit the fact that there was nothing for her.

"How strange—what can it mean ?" she was saying to herself, when Morwyn entered the room with a note.

"A man from the Royal Arms Hotel, Croes-fford, has brought this," she said, "and he is to take back an answer, ma'am." But as Lorraine in some surprise took the note from the salver, a sort of shock passed through her, for she recognised Ellison's handwriting.

With a sudden sense of foreboding, for which she could not account, she tore open the note.

"DEAR LORRAINE—I am at the Royal Arms Hotel, Croes-fford ; will you come down to me ? I have a great deal that I want to say to you, and I am sure Miss Bretherton will spare you to me for the remainder of the day.

"Yours affectionately,

"ELLISON."

"I must go at once and find out what this means !" she exclaimed rising from her seat ; but she first laid the open note on Miss Bretherton's plate. She was very pale, for an intuitive instinct told her that there was something seriously wrong.

Miss Bretherton nodded approvingly as she read the note.

"Of course you must go, my dear ! But the question is, how ? Did the man ride or drive over from Croes-fford, Morwyn ?"

"He drove a sort of high phaeton, ma'am, with a piebald horse."

"Ask him to wait for me, and I will be ready in a moment," replied

Lorraine hurriedly. And in an incredibly short time she returned equipped for the journey.

Miss Bretherton followed her out into the porch.

"I shall not expect you back till I see you," she said, with a brisk nod; "but you had better have a sensible fly for your return journey. These March evenings are cold," and Lorraine made a gesture of assent. "I wonder what has gone wrong?" she thought as she went indoors again. "But there, it is a stupid muddling sort of world. Why should Eric have lost his heart to her, poor fellow, when she does not care a pin about him? It is my opinion there is some one else; it is not only her boy that that sweet young creature is missing. Don't I know how a woman looks when she is in love?" And in spite of her sixty-three years, Miss Bretherton sighed.

That drive seemed interminable to Lorraine; and not even the rapid pace of the piebald mare could content her. It seemed ages before they reached the falls and heard the splash of the water upon the boulders; they were only half-way to Croes-fjord by that time, but the remainder of that lovely drive seemed like an hour in purgatory to Lorraine, struggling with a hundred half-formed fears and surmises.

At last they crossed the river, and the fine buildings of the Royal Arms, with its pleasant gardens, came in sight. At this season of the year it would be almost empty, and only a solitary waiter was in the hall. He led Lorraine down a long corridor, and then ushered her into a small but pleasant sitting-room. A bright fire was burning, and some one had evidently been sitting in the easy-chair beside it, for a book lay on the seat. When the man had gone, Lorraine took it up. It was a tiny edition of 'Thomas à Kempis,' and it had Gavin's name inside. One paragraph with a pencil-mark attracted her notice—"For all men recommend patience; few, however, they are who are willing to suffer." The next moment the sound of a footstep outside made her hurriedly close the book. Sometimes in life a door opens and all fate is changed for us, or we dread some unknown evil, and in a moment we find it is a fact. For days some dull insistent voice had been foreboding ill to her inner consciousness; something had happened—was happening—all was not well with those loved ones she had left behind. True, it was only a presentiment, but when the door opened and Ellison came quietly out from the shadows into the sunlight and stood before her there were no words needed; they only looked at each other, and Lorraine grew white to her very lips.

Then Ellison took her hand very gently.

"Lorraine, dear," she said in tone of forced calmness, "I cannot help it being a shock to you. I know how my sudden appearance must frighten you, but I could not bring myself to write. You can guess what I have to tell you."

"Yes," returned Lorraine; but there was despair in her eyes. "The first look at your face has told me everything."

"Am I so changed?" with a sad smile; "but I was always a poor actor, Lorraine. Gavin and I have broken off our engagement; it was all my doing; he was very angry with me at first, and accused me of jilting him, but I brought him at last to own that I was right. Dearly as I loved him—as I must always love him—that was one thing I could not do even for him. I could not marry him, knowing that his heart belonged to another woman."

A low cry burst from Lorraine, and then she hid her face in her trembling hands. But Ellison put her sisterly arms around her.

"Hush, Lorraine. There is no need for all this agitation. Thank God, that for me the worst is over. There were a few terrible days, when all seemed doubt and darkness, and I suffered—ah, how I suffered—and then the light came, and I left off groping for the path, and I knew strength would be given me to do the right. Then I went home and sent for Gavin."

"Ellison, will you let me speak?"

"Yes; but not yet. You must let me finish first." And then in a few concise words she explained how George Bates's report had reached her.

"I did not believe him," she went on; "It was Gavin's face that brought conviction to me. He is so true, Lorraine. A lie is not possible to him, and he owned his affection for you frankly."

"Ellison, you must hear me." But Ellison shook her head and went on.

"It is a great misfortune, but I have no one to blame but myself. I would not be engaged to him, and I went away all those weeks, and then that terrible accident happened. Lorraine, do you think that I do not understand it all? The comfort Gavin was to you, and how the love grew up in your heart almost unconsciously? He has owned to me that you attracted him from the first. But it has not been so with you?"

"No," returned Lorraine, almost inaudibly. Then she took her cousin's hands and kissed them passionately. "God bless you for saying that—for thinking it—but it is true, true as heaven above us. It was only when he left off coming, that I began to discover how much he was to me. I think I was just a little sorry when I heard of your engagement. It made me feel dull and out in the cold; but I did not understand until"—and then she shivered and hid her face again. Day and night; in darkness and early dawn, those words sounded in her ears, "My darling, my darling, have I killed you? Open your sweet eyes and look at me."

You need not defend yourself," returned Ellison softly; "you poor thing, do I not know all? It is no fault of yours that this misery has come upon me. Let me say something more, Lorraine; you know how noble Gavin is; though he confessed to me that he loved you,

he begged me with tears in his eyes to marry him. For the moment he really wished it, and if I could have brought myself to do so, he would have been so good to me. 'The very hairs of your head are sacred to me!' he actually said that. But, Lorraine, I would rather have dropped dead at his feet than have stooped to such humiliation, even for his dear sake."

"Ellison," and here Lorraine lifted up her pallid, tear-stained face, "why did you ever shelter us? I have been your curse instead of your blessing."

"You must not say that. This trouble has been sent for some wise purpose. Lorraine, why do you shrink from me so, as though you had been guilty of some wrong against me? Sit down beside me and let us talk it out quietly; we must consider the future. I will do anything for Gavin but marry him."

"Not now, perhaps, but in a year or two's time. Dear Ellison, let me speak now. I will never come back to Highlands—never. I am quite strong, and can work for my own living; besides, Miss Bretherton will only be too thankful to keep me. You shall live in peace in your beautiful home, and after a time Colonel Trevor will forget his fancy, and then he will come back to you, and you will be generous and forgive him, and consent to make him happy."

"Never," was Ellison's answer; and now there was a strange flash from the blue eyes. "Dear Lorraine, put this dream out of your head, for it will never come to pass. Gavin will marry, of course, but it is you who can alone make him happy. Do you know what I said to him? 'Lorraine shall come back soon; when I am ready for her, I will send you to fetch her.' Lorraine, when Gavin comes he will ask you to marry him; and if my life is to know any peace you must promise me to say yes."

CHAPTER LIII.

RECALLED.

AFTER all Lorraine did not return to Black Nest that day; in the afternoon the piebald made another journey to Nefydd Madoc, and a pencilled note begged that Morwyn would pack the few things that were necessary for the night.

"Ellison wishes me to stay here," she wrote, "and has promised to bring me back to-morrow. I know you will not mind, dear Miss Bretherton;" and Miss Bretherton's answer was as curt as usual.

"Please yourself, and you please me. 'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest,' is the motto at Black Nest. Why do you not ask your friend to stay a week with us?—Yours affectionately, MARION BRETHERTON."

It was Lorraine's sudden indisposition that made Ellison anxious to keep her for the night. They had been talking quietly and with greater calmness over all that had passed, when she saw Lorraine's face grow suddenly white, and the next moment her head fell forward on her breast.

It was only a passing faintness. Ellison placed her comfortably on the couch and bathed her forehead with eau de cologne, and in a few minutes the dizziness passed, and she tried to sit up; but her teeth chattered, and she looked so wan that Ellison insisted on her lying down all the afternoon.

"You are not as strong as you make out," she said. "You must let me take care of you to-night, and to-morrow you will be all right." And then she said in a low voice, "Don't make things worse for me; do not let me have the pain of knowing that I have made you ill;" but Lorraine disclaimed this eagerly.

"I have had this faintness once or twice before, it is nothing; your voice sounded a hundred miles away, and then I seemed to hear the sea booming, and I felt you lay me down. I can write the note now, if you will send it;" and then she had pencilled the few words.

That day it was Lorraine who suffered; and Ellison, who had drunk her own bitter portion to the dregs long ago, sat beside her trying to comfort her.

More than once she repeated the same words: "For me the worst is over. If I live to be an old woman, I shall never suffer such pain again; I ought to be thankful for that. When a great sorrow comes, it seems to swallow up all minor ones."

And presently, "If one waits for the light it will certainly come, and then one must follow it closely; if only one can discern the right path, half the difficulty is over; and unless one's eyes are blinded by self-will, one can always see it."

"Dear Ellison, are you sure of that?"

"I am sure of it now; I have the testimony of my own experience. One night, when I was at that hotel in Weymouth Street, I could not sleep, and everything seemed dark and wretched. It was like one of my old nightmares, as though I were walking down long, endless roads that led nowhere, or traversing a sleeping city at midnight, that seemed like the city of the dead. I was in sore perplexity, and then all at once the words came to me, almost as though some one had spoken them—but of course that was only my sleepless fancy—'This is the way, walk ye in it;' and I knew then that if I married Gavin I should be making a fearful mistake."

Lorraine was silent; she had exhausted her arguments, and there was nothing more to say. Ellison's strong will baffled her finest intentions; she left no margin for generosity. "Dear Ellison, if you would only see things as I see them;" but Ellison shook her head.

"I prefer my own point of view. Ah, you think I am obstinate, but I am only speaking the soundest common-sense. You and Gavin

have taught me a good deal, Lorraine. When you first came to Highlands how little I knew in comparison with you; you were a wife, a mother, a widow; you had seen the dark, seamy side of life, but I was nothing but a grown-up, ignorant child. All that is changed now," and she sighed as she spoke. "I know and feel what other women have known and felt before me; and in the light of that new knowledge—and out of the very love he taught me—I say that if I married Gavin there would not be a day that I should not wish myself dead."

"Ellison!" and Lorraine trembled; that note of passion in Ellison's voice startled her very soul.

"I must have all or none," she went on. "I will accept no compromise, no patched-up pretence of happiness; other women may be content with a portion of their husband's heart; other women may be satisfied with kindness and friendship and good-fellowship; with the crumbs and shreds of a spent passion; but I am not one of these. I will not pretend to be humble. I know my own value, and the worth of all I have to offer. Gavin knows it too, but he is not his own master; he respects me too much to try and coerce me in any way, and by this time he knows I am right."

"But, Ellison," in a timid voice, and Lorraine flushed painfully as she spoke, "there is one thing I cannot understand; you had no scruple in accepting Colonel Trevor, and yet he had been married before?"

"I see what you mean, but that never presented any difficulty to me. Helen was my dear unknown friend; I never thought of her as a rival. Lorraine, I am sure you understand me. You know, as Gavin knows, that I am only speaking the truth in all soberness. Though I am not an imaginative woman like you and Muriel, I have my ideals, and I will not lower them. I will be true to myself and true to him, and I will not be afraid of a lonely life."

"Oh, Ellison, if I could only be as good as you!" And then a smile came to Ellison's lips.

"You should call things by their right name—I am afraid there is more pride than goodness; but all the same I like you to think well of me. Do you feel better now, you poor thing? Lorraine, whatever happens, remember I shall never think less of you—it is not in my nature to change; when once I care for a person I care for ever, and you and I are like sisters."

"You are dearer to me than any sister," returned Lorraine with tearful earnestness. "Ellison, how am I to say good-bye to you to-morrow; the very idea breaks my heart?"

"Give me the promise that I asked you to give me, and I will spend a week with you at Black Nest. Come, that is a bargain, Lorraine, I really mean it. I should be glad of a few days' quiet in this lovely place, but I must go back for Sam Brattle's marriage. Oh, it is all in the day's work," as Lorraine looked at her wistfully.

"I do not mean to be soft with myself and shrink from every little painful duty. My dear, how is one to endure life unless one doggedly does everything as it comes? Do you know what I have got into the habit of saying to myself?—

"Come what come may,
Time and the hour run through the roughest day."

Cousin Louise so often quoted that."

Lorraine never knew when she gave that promise or whether she ever gave it, but the next morning Ellison quietly announced her intention of spending the week at Nefydd Madoc. "I am rather curious to make Mother Hubbard's acquaintance," she said, as she cut some delicate slices of tongue and laid them on Lorraine's plate. She spoke and moved so naturally that Lorraine looked at her almost startled. No one would have guessed from Ellison's manner that she had lain awake most of the night battling with another wave of despair; but with the morning light calmness had returned to her.

They started for Nefydd Madoc early in the afternoon, and reached Black Nest by tea-time. Miss Bretherton received her new guest with great empressement: "All Mrs. Herbert's friends are welcome," she said, with old-fashioned courtesy, "but none so welcome as the Mistress of Brae Farm;" and she made much of her.

Ellison admired everything. "Nora's holiday house is very much to my taste," she observed, when Lorraine came into her room to wish her good-night. "And Mother Hubbard herself is a stately little person; what keen eyes she has—they seem to bore one through and through."

"I have grown to love her dearly," replied Lorraine. "Is it not tiresome that she will never call me anything but Mrs. Herbert? That is one of her whimsies."

"Oh, she is as full of whims as a nut is of meat, but her heart is in the right place. Lorraine, do you think you can be content here for two or three months?" And then Ellison put her strong white hands on her shoulders and looked full at her. "I shall want you long before that, but I think that for many reasons it will be wiser for you to stay here. Miss Bretherton will love to have you, and then the air is so bracing."

"Of course I will stay if you wish it; Ellison, you must know that my one wish is to please you in everything; just now all places are the same to me, and I shall carry a heavy heart wherever I go."

"Oh, that will pass," returned Ellison hastily; and then she kissed Lorraine's cheek and gently dismissed her. It had been a long day—the days were all so terribly long now; Ellison longed for night and the darkness—when she might unbuckle her armour and think her own bitter thoughts in peace; even Lorraine's presence was irksome to her; her very sweetness and sadness only told her in forcible language that it was no wonder that Gavin loved her best.

But each returning day found her as calm and self-sustained as ever, and quietly ready to fall in with any little plan. There were long walks with Lorraine, and afternoon drives with Miss Bretherton; there were desultory rambles in the garden and woods, and in the evening she would take her share of the reading aloud.

One morning, when Miss Bretherton had taken her to the birds' breakfast-table, and all the little feathered guests had partaken of Mother Hubbard's bounty, Ellison proposed that they should stroll down by the rivulet.

"There is something I want to ask you," she continued, "and yet my request needs explanation. Miss Bretherton, in life one sometimes plays a game of cross-purposes—the wrong couples get mixed up—and the right person somehow strays away. Lorraine and I and another person I need not name have all been taking part in that game."

"Yes, I know," and a significant gleam came into Miss Bretherton's keen eyes. "Oh, you are a brave woman, Miss Lee, and my dear Mrs. Herbert are brave too; and if this world were not such a muddling place, you ought both of you to be happy."

"There are different kinds of happiness," returned Ellison with a sigh; "mine and Lorraine's will not be the same. If she has more in her life than I am ever likely to have, one must remember that she has suffered more too. Think what awful depths of humiliation and sorrow her married life must have covered; and then the loss of her only child, and she has borne it all so patiently. If any one deserves to be happy it is Lorraine."

"Well, I won't contradict you there."

"Of course you will not contradict me; do I not know how you love her. Dear Miss Bretherton, things cannot come right all at once; a tangled skein takes time to unravel. Will you do me this one kindness—will you keep Lorraine until I send some one to fetch her—that is the favour I have to ask."

"Then it is one that is easy to grant; send for her when you will, summer, or autumn, or winter, and you will take away the best of my sunshine, but she shall not stay one hour longer for that."

And then, when Ellison had left her to join Lorraine in a walk to the village, Miss Bretherton stood still for a long time leaning on the crutch handle of her stick and pondering deeply. "She is a brave woman," she muttered at last; "few would have the courage to do what she has done for that sweet young creature's sake. It was just cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. Heaven help her! it will be a weary world to her as long as her youth lasts; but when she is old and blessings come home to roost at Brae Farm, she will know what a peaceful heart means." And then Mother Hubbard trotted to the house, where Winnie Fack was awaiting her.

The next day Ellison left them. Lorraine drove with her to the station, but on the way they said little to each other, perhaps Ellison

noticed that Lorraine's eyes were full of tears, and that every now and then she brushed them away. Just as they reached Croes-fford and the station was in sight, Ellison laid her hand on her cousin's arm.

"Lorraine, remember you have not promised me in words, but there was a look in your eyes that told me you understood me. When the time comes, when I send him, you must be good to him for all our sakes. Gavin must have the woman he loves, or life will be worthless to me; for his sake—for my sake—I will not say for your own—give him the answer he wants." And then, as she said this in a tone of intense agitation, the two women clung to each other, and Ellison's face was wet with Lorraine's tears.

Those spring days that followed were sorrowful ones to Lorraine; to her loving, sensitive nature the idea that she had innocently supplanted her cousin was a source of exquisite torment. Ellison's very nobility, the absence of all reproach, the boundlessness of her generosity only added to Lorraine's compunction and regret. And there were hours when she would thankfully have given up her own hopes to restore to Ellison her lost happiness.

"If I could only undo it all and put things straight between them," she would say to herself; but even as she uttered the words she knew that it was too late for any such reparation. But she suffered acutely, and it was no wonder that, as the spring merged into summer, she grew thin and pale with that ceaseless fretting. Miss Bretherton scolded and pitied her by turns.

Lorraine tried vainly to battle with her depression; she had many humble friends at Nefydd Madoc, and a few sick people whom she visited almost daily. But when Muriel arrived for a long visit, she was grievously disappointed with her friend's looks.

"The mountain air has done little for Mrs. Herbert," she wrote to Ellison; "she will have it that she is quite well, but she looks sadly thin and frail," and Ellison's face grew very grave as she read this.

Muriel stayed at Black Nest for a month, and then Eric Vincent came down with Nora and Effie. Miss Bretherton pretended to grumble when he told her that he could only stay a week. "I will pay you a longer visit by-and-by, Aunt Marion," he said to her, "but just now my presence is needed at Highlands." Poor Eric, it was not yet possible for him to remain in the same house with Mrs. Herbert without misery to himself.

But Nora and Effie remained behind, and Lorraine forgot her lassitude and depression as she watched Tedo's little sweetheart at her play. Very soon Effie could coax her into joining them in all sorts of delightful flower-gathering or blackberry-picking expeditions.

"Her dear Herbert," as she called her, was soon her willing slave, for Lorraine's motherly nature could not long remain closed to any child. "Effie was always a darling," she said to Miss Bretherton, "but I love her doubly because my boy was so fond of her."

Muriel would have been happier in her mind if she could have seen Lorraine a few weeks later. How could her face fail to brighten with response when Nora hung on one arm lovingly, and Effie kissed and fondled the hand she held?

"I do love my dear Herbert!" Effie would say. "Is she not the beautifullest woman in the world, Nora?"—and at this childish flattery Lorraine broke into a low laugh. Effie's beautifullest woman had pale cheeks and dark tired lines round her eyes. Nevertheless, Miss Bretherton and her faithful Pritchard mutually congratulated each other on the improvement in Mrs. Herbert's looks.

"She has taken a turn at last, and it is those blessed children that have done it," observed Pritchard tearfully. "Some women must be mothering some young creature or other—it comes natural to them—and you can see that her poor heart is just starved to death;" and Pritchard was right.

Meanwhile the Mistress of Brae Farm was passing the summer days as usual, superintending her household, or going over the farm with Sam Brattle. No one ever saw her idle or unoccupied for a moment, and the work she got through between breakfast and supper would have kept two ordinary women busy, but to Ellison's strong vitality work was her only safety-valve.

After a time she went among her neighbours as usual. She was a little stately perhaps, and carried her head higher, but even her most intimate friends could not notice any perceptible difference in her. Her fair face was as serene as ever, and yet to those who loved her—to Lorraine and to Gavin, when he saw her—there was a marked change.

Gavin was at Lucca, dawdling away the early autumn days, when Ellison's first letter reached him. He was sitting in the loggia of the palazzo where he was staying when it was brought to him, and at the sight of the familiar handwriting the blood suffused his face.

It was one of Ellison's old letters, and every sentence breathed the old tenderness; but when he had finished it, Gavin's eyes were full of tears. But the gist of the whole was in the postscript. "Why do you stay away so long? Surely you must have grown weary of your wanderings by this time? Muriel is wanting her brother and Brae its master, and there is a friend at Brae Farm ready to welcome you. You know that, dear Gavin, do you not?" It was this sentence that made him start, for he knew he had his recall. The next day he had set his face homewards, and three days later his foot was on English soil again.

He had telegraphed to Muriel, and he knew that she would carry the news to Brae Farm; but as he drove down from the Woodlands, he looked across at the farm buildings with suppressed emotion. Would Ellison expect him that evening? How was he to go to her as usual? But when he reached Brae House, he found the question solved for him.

Muriel welcomed him affectionately, and then she asked him if he were tired.

"Why, of course not!" he returned, evidently surprised by the question. "You know I slept at the 'Grosvenor' last night."

"Then will you go down to the Farm this evening?" she returned quickly. "Ellison said, if you were tired, I was not to give you the message; but you look as fresh as possible."

Gavin muttered something in answer, and a moment later he left the room; but as soon as dinner was over, he took up his hat and walked down to Brae Farm. It was best to get it over as quickly as possible, he told himself. If one had to go up to a cannon's mouth, it was no use hanging back. Gavin was certainly no coward, but there are some things that would try any man, and the first meeting with Ellison was one of these.

He had not expected for one moment that she would be at the gate, but as he unlatched it, he saw her coming to meet him; and the next moment both her hands were in his, and she was saying to him—

"Gavin, why have you stayed away so long? How could you think I meant that? I was obliged to send for you at last, and now there is something you must do for me. Gavin, I want Lorraine home. You must go to her and tell her so." And as she said this, quietly and without faltering, he knew that she was changed indeed—that it was not the old Ellison, but a nobler, truer, gentler Ellison who stood before him, holding his hands and looking at him with those clear-eyed glances.

CHAPTER LIV.

GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS.

In the garden at Black Nest there was a certain sheltered seat under a jutting crag of rock that went by the name of the Lady's Bower; and there, on sultry afternoons, Lorraine and her young companions would sit with their work or book until the gong summoned them to tea.

When David Bretherton built Black Nest, some of the wild moorland had been reclaimed for a garden, and had been laid out in quaint picturesque terraces.

The view from the Lady's Bower was very varied. The terraces, gay with flowers, led down to a rustic bridge, under which a clear sparkling little stream gurgled and foamed over grey boulders. Standing on the bridge, one could see now and then the silvery flash of some small fish as it rose to the surface of the water, or the gorgeous tints of the dragon-fly skimming over the pond, while the sudden splash of a water-rat would invade the silence.

A little below the bridge the stream entered the wood, and on

summer afternoons it was Nora's and Effie's delight to hunt for ferns and strange mosses. The river was shallow and the current small, and there was no possible risk. As Lorraine sat in the Lady's Bower, she could hear their voices plainly, or see one or other of them as they emerged out on the open moorland. One afternoon they had left her as usual, but Lorraine, who had opened her book, let it lie on her lap unread as her eyes rested on the purple moorlands and grey boulders. Above her head hung clusters of dark-red rowan berries, while the humming of bees feasting on the heather honey, and the tinkling and babbling of the rivulet seemed to blend with all manner of musical sounds—the souging of the summer breeze in the tree-tops, and the flutter of innumerable leaves; the whirring of wings, from pewits and grouse on the moor; or the scurry of tiny feet, as some small furred thing ran from one hiding-place to another. Garden and moorland seemed alive with soft resonant music; an undertone of gladness seemed to pervade the deep summer stillness. Gauzy insects and beautifully-tinted butterflies quivered and danced in the sunny ambient air, while the spicy breath of carnations and the sweet scents of innumerable flowers mingled with the thymy fragrance from the herb garden and the damp odours of hidden mosses and water-plants.

Lorraine began to feel a drowsiness steal over her; the droning of a wasp near her seemed magnified a hundredfold. Then the sound of a footstep on the bridge below struck sharply on her ear, and she straightened herself and opened her eyes. And then it seemed to her as though she were still dreaming, as though some illusion had crossed the threshold of her thoughts, and stood like an actual embodiment in the sunlight. But the next moment her heart began to beat more violently, and she grew suddenly breathless. It was no vision. Some one in a grey tweed coat, with an erect soldierly figure and a thin brown face, was crossing the bridge and coming rapidly up the steps that led from one terrace to another; and as she rose from her seat a little dizzily, Colonel Trevor stood before her, and in his deep-set eyes there was a gleam of intense joy.

"Lorraine!" he said, in a trembling voice. And then, before she could do more than look at him with a faint welcoming smile, his arms were round her, and he was holding her closely to his breast. "My darling, my darling!" was all he said. But the next moment she had freed herself.

"Colonel Trevor!" she said reproachfully. But he only smiled at her, and drew her down beside him.

"Darling," he said gently, "I have brought my credentials with me;" and he laid a letter in her lap. "You know that writing: you know who has sent me to you, and why I am here. Lorraine, are you going to be very good to me?"

The passionate pleading in his eyes made Lorraine busy herself with her letter; but the words danced mistily before her, and her

hand shook so that she was obliged to put it down. The next moment Gavin had taken possession of both hand and letter. "Dearest, we will read it together by-and-by; you will need my interpretation. But there is one thing I must know first. Lorraine, are you still mine, as I have been yours all these weary months? Is your heart faithful to me? Darling, surely there is no need for any explanation; we know that we love each other. The love that was our sorrow is now to be our joy. Lorraine, put your dear hand in mine, and tell me that you will be my wife!"

"But Ellison?" she whispered.

"Ellison has given you to me. Lorraine, why do you shiver and tremble so? The time has gone by for hesitation. You are mine already by every law, human and divine—mine because I am yours in body and soul, and mine because"—and here he stooped and looked into her eyes—"you have already owned that you care for me!" And then, as he said this, Lorraine hid her face on his shoulder and broke into a passion of tears.

Yes, he had won her. How could she resist him, who was already so dear to her? Were not Ellison's words for ever echoing in her ear—"When the time comes, when I send him, you must be good to him for all our sakes. Gavin must have the woman he loves, or life will be worthless to me. For his sake, for my sake—I will not say for your own—give him the answer he wants?" But—alas for Lorraine!—that answer could only be wrung from her with bitter tears. The sweetness of love had come to her—abundant sheaves gathered in the rich ripe aftermath—but the tares of sorrowful regret were hers too. It would be years before she or Gavin either would think of Ellison's self-sacrifice and devotion without pain.

Gavin may be forgiven if at that moment he forgot everything in his passionate joy, when the woman he worshipped consented to be his wife; but to Lorraine's unselfish nature no such forgetfulness was possible.

He was beside her—her well-beloved—and the voice that had been her music in many a dark hour was breathing loving words into her ear; and she knew, and gloried in the knowledge, that the man whom she had "held as half divine" was hers, and would be hers through time and eternity. And yet Lorraine's eyes held a deep sadness in their brown depths. "Dear," she said presently, "you must be patient with me; you must never misunderstand me for a moment. I love you as much as any woman should love the man she has promised to marry; but if I do not seem as glad and happy as I ought to be, it is because my happiness means another woman's loss, and that even in my joy"—and then she looked at him with great sweetness—"it troubles me to think of Ellison;" and when she said this, Gavin's face grew also grave.

"I do not forget her," he said, in a low voice; and he thought he was speaking the truth. But how was he to remember when the soft

clinging of Lorraine's palm to his hand, and the remembered touch of her sweet lips sent his pulses throbbing? How could he be true to his manhood, and remember Ellison at the supreme moment of his life? But as Lorraine spoke her name, he uncovered his head, as though some regal presence were passing.

"Darling, I love you all the better for saying that! No, I shall never misunderstand you; that fair handwriting is far too distinct and legible;" and here he kissed her brow and the ruddy brownness of her hair. "All our life long Ellison shall be our household saint, and her happiness and well-being shall be our mutual care. Now, love, shall we read her letter together? I must tell you honestly that I know the contents; Ellison consulted me before she wrote it." And then, as Lorraine looked greatly rystified at this, he put it in her hand, and begged her to read it while he strolled down to the bridge again. Perhaps he knew that she would give it better attention if he were not beside her.

Lorraine grew very pale over the letter, for Ellison begged her to marry Gavin without delay.

"When Gavin brings you back, it must be to Brae House as its mistress. He and I have both made up our minds to that," she wrote. "And, after all, why should you keep him waiting? Gavin is not a young man, and this second engagement in a place like Highlands would be terribly embarrassing. Indeed, neither he nor you could stand it; and though I am ready to do anything for Gavin's happiness and yours, I know that neither of you would regard a wedding from Brae Farm as possible or desirable. In a case like this, where there are wheels within wheels, perfect simplicity and straightforwardness will be the wisest and the best, and 'doe the nexte thing' must be your motto.

"Talk matters over quietly with Gavin and Miss Bretherton. Why should you not be married from Black Nest without fuss or ceremony, and in a few weeks' time? Miss Bretherton could give you away, and she and Gavin's best man would be sufficient witnesses. I thought of this when I stood in that tiny church at Nefydd Madoc. When you and Mr. Meredith were showing me that altar-piece, I said to myself, 'One day Lorraine and Gavin will take each other for man and wife, and it will be most likely in this very church.' Gavin will arrange it all, and I am writing to Miss Bretherton. Dear Lorraine, you once said that you wished to please me in everything. It was one of your old pretty speeches, but I shall hold you to this.

"I am longing to see you, but I shall not welcome you unless you return as Gavin's wife. Show him this letter; he will endorse every word. The rest I can safely leave to him."

"Well, have you read your letter?"—and Gavin looked at her meaningly. But Lorraine crumpled it in her hand, and rose quickly. She was very flushed, and her eyes were full of tears.

"Yes, I have read it, but I cannot talk about it now—oh, not to-day!"—and here her eyes grew still more pathetic. "Surely we have happiness enough for to-day?" And perhaps the sweetness of that answer reconciled Gavin to the delay.

They went back to the house after this; and when Miss Bretherton saw them walking silently side by side, a doubtful smile crossed her lips. "So that tangle has been unravelled," she said to herself, "and the right couple has got sorted." But when she looked at her favourite, and saw the moved, humble expression on her face and the lovelight in her eyes, her mood changed.

"Colonel Trevor," she said abruptly, "you are welcome. If there is one thing I love to see, it is the right man in the right place!"—and the grip of her hand finished the sentence.

Gavin did not get his way at first, and for two or three days Lorraine could not be induced to yield to his wishes; but he brought her round at last.

"How am I ever to hold my own against two such strong wills?" she said, with an attempt at playfulness. But her lip trembled as she spoke, and he soothed her with words of grave tenderness.

Five weeks later they were married in the little grey church at Nefydd Madoc, and Miss Bretherton gave the bride away. When the ceremony was over, Lorraine took leave of her friend, and she and Gavin drove to Croes-fford, *en route* for the English Lakes.

When Ellison received her cousin's first letter—from Ambleside—and saw the signature—Lorraine Trevor—she grew a little pale. "Thank God that it is over!" she said inwardly. And then she resolutely set herself to bury the past in oblivion.

* * * * *

Four years later the Mistress of Brae Farm was standing at the little green gate, with her faithful Bairn beside her as usual. It was early afternoon, and the cows were still in the pastures. Even the cocks and the hens were abroad, rooting in distant dust-heaps, and only Tedo's beloved playmates were consorting with the pigeons on the red roof of the granary.

Ellison stood looking up the farmyard path, with one hand shading her eyes from the sun. In these four years the Mistress of Brae Farm had grown a little stouter and a little more sedate, and more than one person had been heard to say that Miss Lee looked older than her age. But her fair face was as placid as ever, and there was a quiet expression in the blue eyes that spoke of a deep underlying peace. Miss Bretherton's prophecy had been verified, and blessings had come home to roost at Brae Farm. Suddenly her face brightened as a slim graceful figure in white turned the corner by the pond, and came swiftly towards her.

Ellison unlatched the gate and hurried to meet her, and a warmer kiss than usual passed between them. "Dear Lorraine, a thousand good wishes for your birthday! But I did not expect to see you alone. What has become of Gavin and my godson?"

"They will be here presently. Jack is having his first riding lesson on Midge. Ellison, how sweet of you to send me that picture; it was the very thing I wanted! Gavin must have turned traitor, or you would not have guessed it. He has been hanging it in its place this morning, and now the Lady's Bower is complete. And Gavin's present?" And then Lorraine stretched out her hand, and pointed mutely to a magnificent sapphire and diamond ring. "You both spoil me," she murmured. "Ellison, do you know I am actually five-and-thirty to-day? Gavin refuses to believe it. He says I grow younger every year." And, indeed, in her white dress and black Spanish hat, Lorraine looked almost girlish. There was an animated flush on her face and a clear sparkle in her eye that made Ellison glance at her keenly.

"Lorraine, there is something you have to tell me. I can read good news in your face. Some one is going to be married. Oh, I was sure of it!"—as Lorraine beamed and nodded, for the Mistress of Brae was an inveterate and incurable match-maker.

"Guess who it is!" But as Ellison pondered and knit her brows, Lorraine suddenly lost patience.

"No, I cannot wait; I see you have no suspicion. It is our dear Muriel. Mr. Vincent spoke to Gavin yesterday. He is so pleased about it, and congratulated Muriel so warmly. He thinks most highly of Mr. Vincent, and so do we all."

"I am very glad," returned Ellison slowly; "but you have taken me completely by surprise. I had no idea that Mr. Vincent cared for her."

"Oh, it has been coming on for a long time! They have always been great friends, but now she is absolutely necessary to him. Gavin was so gratified by the way he spoke of her. He said her high-mindedness and unworldliness had first won him, and that he had woken up to realise the rare beauty of her character."

"Muriel is very much improved, certainly," returned Ellison, in her sedate way. "She has grown far more womanly lately."

"Muriel was always womanly, only she declined to move in other women's grooves. Dear thing, she is wonderfully happy!" Lorraine said no more than this, but for years she had guessed and guarded Muriel's secret. She knew that all these years Muriel had cared for the young Vicar far too much for her own peace of mind. "I never expected Eric to love me; I never thought myself worthy of him," she had said to her one close friend, "and the wonder of it will last me my life. But it is all your doing, Lorraine"—looking at her gratefully. "You shamed me out of my self-will and indolence, and lifted me to higher ground, and there Eric found me." But Lorraine only laughed with tender scorn at this speech.

Ellison and Lorraine had not moved away from the gate, and the next moment a little cavalcade came in sight—first, Tweedledum, frolicking and barking, then a brown Shetland pony, with his mane almost sweeping the ground, with a beautiful dark-eyed boy in a white sailor suit holding himself erect in the saddle. Colonel Trevor

walked beside him. This was John Ellis Trevor, Ellison's godson and pet, and a baby girl was at that moment sleeping in her bassinette in the Brae nursery. It was these two children and her husband's ever-deepening love that had brought back Lorraine's youth.

"Have you told Ellison the news?" was Gavin's first question, as he lifted his boy off the pony. "There—go to your godmother, Jack; you will make a capital horseman in time." And the sturdy little fellow ran towards her.

"Yes, she has told me. I am very, very glad, Gavin!"—and Ellison looked at him with her old kind smile. "I suppose Mr. Vincent will be at the birthday dinner to-night?"

"Why is you glad, Cousin Ellie? Jack's glad too!"—and the beautiful little face looked up at her with childish wistfulness. "Midge was not glad when Jack whipped him. Midge does not like to be whipped, and Jack must be kind to him." And then, as she took the boy up, two little arms squeezed her tightly round the neck. "It is mover's buffday," confided Jack, "and I gived her a picture and a big kiss, and she loved me for it. Baby gived her nothing."

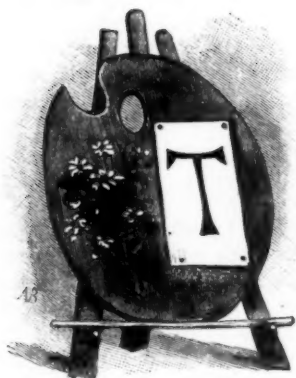
"Look at them, sweetheart!" whispered Gavin. And then the husband and wife exchanged a glance of full understanding and sympathy as they moved slowly towards the house. Ellison was still standing in the sunlight, listening with a tender smile to her godson's prattling confidences. Gavin was right when he said Jack had two mothers. From a mere baby Cousin Ellie had been Jack's fond and devoted slave. "Our boy shall be yours too," Gavin had said to her, when he had gone down to the Farm to tell her of the birth of their son; and both he and Lorraine had nobly redeemed this promise.

We may leave Ellison happily standing in the sunlight, a willing victim to Jack's throttling embraces, with loving eyes watching her from the threshold of her peaceful home. For her too there was a goodly heritage.

In this world we see darkly, and the clearness of our vision is obscured by earthly vapours; and so to many of us it seems that the prizes of life are dealt out unequally, and that many sweet souls gather blanks and suffer loss. And in one sense it may be so, and to many of God's heroines some hard task or toilsome path in the wilderness may be assigned; but their reward is not here. In the higher life, perchance in one of the many mansions, they shall sit down amongst the nobles at the eternal feast, and in the gladness of that day they too shall realise and

"Smile to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest."

THE END.



A GENIUS AND A BEAUTY.

BY ISABELLA FVIE MAYO.

HE formidable citadels of art and ambition have, from time immemorial been stormed and conquered by women, and that apparently with ease and gaiety. Among these is a woman whose name may not be much known in England outside art circles, but who enjoys a deserved and permanent celebrity in her own sphere. We mean the

famous French portrait-painter Elizabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun.

Elizabeth Louise Vigée was born in Paris in 1755, in those frivolous years preceding the terrible Revolution, when few would have been ready to believe that a social volcano was soon to open and rend and scatter the gay life that danced on its surface.

Elizabeth's father was a pastel painter of moderate talent, another instance of the curious tendency of what is mere working aptitude in the parent to rise into genius in the offspring. M. Vigée soon noticed his daughter's gift. When she was only seven, as she sat in the lamplight of the family parlour, she drew the head of a bearded man with so much vigour and spirit, that when her father saw it, he cried with delight:

"You will be a painter, my child, if ever there has been one in the world!"

Elizabeth never forgot her father's prophecy, and that childish sketch, made sacred by his praise, remained in her portfolio till the end of her life.

At six years of age the child, doubtless by her mother's wish, was sent to a convent school, where she filled her copybooks and the white convent walls with impromptu sketches. But in those days, so little was formal female education protracted, that Elizabeth left school "for good" when she was only eleven. She was radiantly happy after her return home, spending the day in her father's studio, and going with her mother to evening prayers. She was sensitively impressed by music, weeping without knowing why at the sound of the organ. Altogether, it seems quite possible that the year which followed was the most delightful of her life, with that joy of admiring and reliant love which is the best bliss of a woman-soul.

In May 1768 the dear father died. His daughter's heart was

well-nigh broken. She turned, with bitter pain, even from her beloved painting, and could not bear to resume her work. But her father's friends, with true wisdom, felt that this was the way by which soothing and consolation would come, and they seemed to have counselled Madame Vigée to propose to her daughter a systematic



MADAME VIGÉE-LE BRUN AND HER DAUGHTER.

(From a painting by herself.)

pilgrimage through all the picture-galleries, public and private, of the French capital. Gradually they won her back to peace and labour. She took up her pencil again, working with a girl-friend, Mademoiselle Boquet, whose father was a dealer in objects of art and curiosity. In the morning the two girls generally went to the Louvre, to the studio

of one of the late M. Vigée's friends, a M. Briard, of no great account as a painter, but a very fair draughtsman and a good teacher. He had some other pupils, and his studio boasted a good collection of casts from the antique, in copying which Elizabeth Vigée and her friend worked away energetically. They brought their dinner with them in a little basket, their particular dainty being some *bœuf à la mode*, procured from one of the concierges of the Gallery. To the end of her life Elizabeth always declared it was the best she had ever tasted, so savoury is the subtle sauce provided by youth and hope.

In the evening the two girls resumed their work in Mademoiselle Boquet's room over her father's shop, from which convenient store they used to be provided with busts or other beautiful art-objects.

Her perpetual contemplation of fine pictures and noble statuary was really Elizabeth's sole art-instruction. She owed little to the good Briard, and he was the first and last of her actual teachers. The great painters of the time were ready to give good advice and valuable hints to the little girl, whose industry they could see, and whose genius they could recognise, and of whom they spoke kindly to one another. She was commended to the notice of Joseph Vernet, whose wise counsel to her is worth quoting.

"My child," said he, "follow no one system and no one school. Study the works of the great Italian or Flemish masters; but above all paint as much as possible from nature. Nature is the first and best of all masters."

Such progress did Elizabeth make, that by the time she was fifteen she was already earning money as a portrait-painter. By this time, too, poor Madame Vigée's fears concerning her daughter's own "good looks" were for ever laid at rest. The development of a real gift often acts upon the body as sunshine acts on plants, and the girl had burst into sudden and beautiful bloom.

When she was sixteen she painted a portrait of her mother, which attracted much attention, and directed to her the notice of the young Duchesse de Chartres, wife of him who afterwards became the notorious Philippe Egalité.

Mademoiselle Vigée's rooms overlooked the terrace of the Palais Royal, whereon the duchess often walked, and she looked up at the pretty girl-artist at her work, and presently requested her to paint her portrait. This introduced her to the royal family and the court, and brought her many fashionable sitters, some of them gay young courtiers, greatly tickled at the idea of sitting for their portraits to so youthful and charming an artist.

Her mother always sat in her studio, and used to be much amused at the arch device by which her daughter always required that the eyes of such gallant subjects should be directed to a point away from the easel where she was sitting, so that if the glance ever unwarily came round to her she could at once cry out, "I am at the eyes just

now," and the looks had to return, however reluctantly, to the given direction.

Elizabeth says that in those days she had never read a novel. The first she read was 'Clarissa Harlowe,' but that was not till after her marriage. With all her gaiety and light-heartedness, Elizabeth seems to have always been steady and sensible. Her discretion had its fitting reward in the respect it earned. The reckless Duc de Chartres was accustomed, with one or two libertine companions, to stand on a flight of steps in the Champs Elysées, greeting the pretty women who passed up and down with insolent satires, or compliments still more insulting. But when Mademoiselle Vigée passed by with her mother, he spared her. It touches the heart with a sense of something good, even in Philippe Egalité, that when he saw the young painter, he would only say audibly, "Oh, of this one there is nothing to say." Libertine as he was, he could reverence the innocence of the industrious, independent maiden, who knew how to respect herself.

The young girl, receiving all the distinguished patronage, found herself a welcome guest in the highest society. She had more invitations than she knew how to accept. She became conscious that formal socialities of this sort made undue inroads on time, purse, and energies. In short, she discovered that "work" and "society" will not combine—one of the two must come second. A little incident helped to decide Elizabeth Vigée as to which should conquer in her case. She was invited to dine with the Princess de Rohan Rochefort, and was sitting ready in a fine white satin gown, when a sudden thought struck her with regard to an unfinished portrait standing in her studio. She ran off to criticise it in the light of her new idea, and unwarily sat down where she had put a wet palette an hour before. Of course, the pretty dress was spoiled. Elizabeth had to stay at home on that occasion, and resolved to accept no more invitations to dinner, and adhered to her resolve.

Doubtless she was helped to this determination by stern realities in the sober background of her life. For the widowed household had absolutely nothing to rely on but this young daughter's earnings, and the cherished brother was still to be educated. The burden seemed too heavy for such tender and sensitive hands, and the mother's heart quailed to contemplate it. Between the biographical lines, we can read that there must have been many faint misgivings and gloomy forebodings in the little household. It is quite unlikely that it was extravagant, yet these women did not readily look for relief to more rigid retrenchment and simplicity. Though they must have had many little expenditures of the strictly non-necessary kind, they would doubtless believe that Elizabeth's success depended on these, and that such income as she had would suffer if they were suspended. So hard is it to escape from the prejudices prevalent in the atmosphere where we live.

So they turned to other resources—to one which would certainly not commend itself to modern English ideas. Strictly in the interests of her beloved daughter, Madame Vigée accepted an offer of marriage from a rich jeweller.

By so doing, possibly she procured family solvency and security, but not family comfort. To be rich does not necessarily indicate that one inclines to generosity or even to justice; rather it proves a talent for getting and keeping—possibly at other people's expense. The step-father maintained the home on the most meagre of allowances, and at the same time absorbed all his step-daughter's earnings. Especially it wounded her feelings to see him wear out her dear father's clothes without even having any alterations made. The customs of the time and the style of the *ménage* are alike illustrated by the revelation that the rising young painter slept in a dark corner at the foot of her mother's bed. Doubtless, had mother and daughter accepted this step-sire's style of economy instead of accepting him the daughter's earnings would have been found quite sufficient. Her own father's friends, and the great artist Joseph Vernet were all very angry to see the young genius thus enslaved by the miser. But their remonstrances had no effect. Elizabeth herself thought of no other use for her gains than to preserve peace at home; the trying thing was, that no sacrifice seemed to secure happiness there.

Once more the unhappy mother cast about to find relief for her darling, and once more enslaved by the prejudices of her time, could discover no better resource than another loveless marriage, this time for poor Elizabeth herself.

Monsieur Le Brun—nephew of the French historical painter of that name—was a great connoisseur in paintings, and he had made the young artist's acquaintance by lending her some pictures from his gallery. She was only twenty years old when he offered her his hand. She had already made a name, had painted more than a hundred and sixteen portraits, and had received honourable distinction from the academy. The marriage proposed to her had little attraction; she could profess no love for her future husband, though she then believed him kind and estimable. She married simply to please her mother and to escape from a home which had grown dismal and uncongenial. So little did she know the highest value of the "career" to which she had so easily attained.

For family reasons the marriage was kept secret for a while. Some who thought it impending came to the poor little bride with entreaties for her delay, and warnings—alas! too late—as to the character of the man whom they little dreamed to be already her husband.

Alas, these warnings were too true! Monsieur Le Brun might be more gentlemanly and agreeable than the distasteful step-father, but the young wife soon found that her husband was a gambler and a *roué*, whose vices could clutch as graspingly as the sober avarice of

the other. The husband seized all his wife's earnings; once actually refusing to give her two *louis* out of a sum of twelve thousand francs which he had just received for her labour! Often he did not tell her when he received payments for her work, but instantly put the money into wild speculations of his own. She never got the whole price of a picture, unless it happened to be paid to her during his absence from Paris. And this, be it remembered, although the pair were never at any time a united couple, with any common interests and objects of life. He neglected her; he was unfaithful to her; he cared for her work only to seize its winnings. She was hurt she was sorry; but it is plain that she had never cared enough for him to be deeply pained by his unworthiness. The joy of her life was in her work itself, and her husband's rapacity, searching as it was, did not cut off the little pleasures and comforts which sufficed to make life agreeable to one who seemed content to ask from the world nothing more than it is inclined to give.

She was constantly *fêted* and favoured. At one of the meetings of the Academy, at which she was present, La Harpe read an ode on woman's genius, which he pointed with the pretty painter's name, and the whole audience, including the Duchesse de Chartres and the King of Sweden rose and turned towards her.

Elizabeth was only four-and-twenty when she received a commission to paint the portrait of Marie Antoinette. It is interesting to read her enthusiastic eulogium of that ill-starred sovereign's personal beauty. "She was tall," she writes, "admirably formed, with just enough embonpoint," and then, after dwelling on feature by feature of the royal countenance, she adds, "That which was still most remarkable in her face was the brilliancy of her complexion . . . which I have never seen equalled in any other woman." She was equally charmed by the Queen's manners. Marie Antoinette seems to have been most considerate in her treatment of those near her person, and anxious to train her children in the same gracious duty—inviting little peasant girls to visit the young princess, and inculcating that at the feast they should be helped first, and the royal hostess "should do the honours." Alas! at that terrible time these sweet little graces were as futile as a bottle of perfume poured on a volcano.

In 1786, Madame Vigée Le Brun completed a charming portrait of the Queen in a simple country dress, which was exhibited in the *salon*, and secured for her an ovation of a very original kind.

Towards the close of the season, a little play called the "*Réunion des Arts*" was produced at the theatre of the Vaudeville, and Madame Le Brun was invited to be present at the first performance. When the curtain drew up, revealing on the stage a personification of painting, Madame Le Brun was astonished to see that the actress enacting the part was got up in her semblance, and that she was represented in the act of painting the famous portrait of the Queen.

Elizabeth seemed to have natural gifts as a courtier. Her position

required a great deal of tact. "Monsieur," afterwards Louis XVIII., persisted in singing to her while he sat for his portrait. His songs were, she says, "Not immoral exactly, but so vulgar that I could not imagine how such rubbish ever reached the Court." Also, he never sang in tune. But when he asked her, "How do you think I sing?" she readily replied, "Like a prince, monseigneur!"

Madame Le Brun always exercised her influence with her sitters on the side of simplicity in dress. She detested the costume of the time, with its puffings and powders, buckram and tight-lacing. She liked to drape her subjects in broad scarves, lightly placed about figure and arms. She actually induced one noble lady to be painted with her beautiful black hair falling about her shoulders—the exact reverse of the prevailing mode. The duchess felt that her new style of head-dress became her, and as her "sittings" were often prolonged till near her dinner-hour, she used to appear in the evening with her hair as the painter had arranged it, and commended by her beauty and rank, the "new style" was admired, imitated, and became the fashion!

Naturally, therefore, Madame Le Brun's taste in her own dress was most inexpensive and simple. She always wore white tunics or "blouses," either of muslin or cashmere. She never powdered her hair, and the only head-dress she ever seems to have worn was the light gauze veil which is introduced in her portrait now in the Louvre. When she had been married about two years she became the mother of the little daughter who appears clasped in her arms in her famous portraits. For a time she gave way to the wildest maternal idolatry. Even her adored art was neglected.

But her husband did not spare her industry. Though she had more commissions for portraits than she could easily satisfy, he urged her also to take pupils, so as further to increase the income on which he made his levies. It was an unsuccessful endeavour. Madame Le Brun's own heart was not in this kind of work, and most of her pupils were older than herself, and her bright face and playful ways were not calculated to inspire them with that awe which is due to an instructor. She actually joined them in girlish romps! The scheme was soon discontinued.

She often gave as many as three sittings a day. This excess of work proving trying to her health and nerves, she adopted the habit of a regular afternoon rest—an hour or two of silent repose which she called *mon calme*, and to which in after years she used to attribute her long-continued capacity for work, and the well-preserved state of her looks and energies.

Of home-life, as we regard it, she seems to have had none. Though, as we already know, she eschewed dinner-parties, she delighted in social gatherings, whose later hours did not cost the daylight fit for labour, and whose festivity was of a lighter and brighter sort. She did not care much for dancing-parties, preferring

those assemblies gathered for music and conversation, or even little private theatricals, in the management of which she excelled. Her own hospitality took the shape of "little suppers." Her *menu* was plain and limited—always the same number of dishes—one of poultry, one of fish, one of vegetables, with a salad to wind up the repast.

But all the names famous at the Royal Court, or in art and literature, put in appearance at these little festivities. She says humbly that these fine people did not come to see her, but to meet each other. "Marshals of France" had sometimes to sit on the floor, and one stiff old warrior had some difficulty in rising again! Prince Henry of Prussia, visiting in Paris, would take his violin with him and delight his audience. The great tragedian Talma was there. So was Grétry of Liège, the famous composer, and the Abbé Delille, and the sculptor Chaudet. Some of the best music in Paris was to be heard in the pretty artist's little salon. Her husband's married sister, who had an exquisite voice, was constantly there, and Madame Le Brun, who was passionately fond of music, would sometimes sing herself. She had had little culture on this line, but Grétry loved the "silvery tones" of her voice, and encouraged by his praise, she sang with the same unconscious abandon with which she did everything else.

"Politics," already becoming "dangerous" in that place and time, were never allowed to be mentioned at those little gatherings.

One of these suppers became famous in a way very displeasing to the guileless hostess.

She tells us herself that on one occasion she had invited the usual twelve or fifteen people to hear some verses read by the fashionable poet of the period. That afternoon, during the "*calme*,"—evidently not of too rigid a kind—her brother had read to her a few pages out of the travels of Anacharsis, and coming to the description of a Greek dinner with its sauces he had paused to suggest, "You might introduce these into your supper this evening." The lively woman sprang at the idea, gave instructions to her cook, and began to plan Greek costumes for herself, her beloved brother's wife, and her other lady guests, paying special attention to her own tiny daughter and another pretty little girl, so that she had "little time to spare for herself," but from her general style of dress did not need to make much change. The "properties" of her studio provided materials.

Some magnificent Etruscan vases were borrowed from a kind neighbour. Madame Le Brun herself spread the table. The more intimate gentlemen friends were enlisted in the scheme.

The two "guests of the occasion" were astounded and enchanted by the novelty and beauty of the welcome they received, the party in their Greek costumes singing one of Glück's chorals to the accompaniment of "a gilded lyre." For refreshment, besides the two Greek dishes which the cook had prepared under Madame Le Brun's instructions, they had, she says, "a Greek cake made of honey and currants, and two dishes of vegetables," with "one bottle of Cyprus wine,"

which had been given her a little while before. All seems to have been as simple and innocent as it was pretty, rather childish, perhaps, and certainly in pathetic contrast with the awful storm which was already brewing in the atmosphere of France!

Unfavourable eyes were watching any festivity in Court circles, and the poor King, anxious to avert the displeasure of subjects so bitterly alienated by the excesses of his predecessors, remarked with some displeasure to a gentleman who had been present at this "Greek supper" that he was sorry to hear it had cost 20,000 francs, which would, indeed, have been an outrageous sum. The friendly guest disabused His Majesty's mind of this mistake, but that did not avail to check the rumour already on foot. It grew, as rumours do grow. From Rome Madame Le Brun heard that her little party had cost 40,000. At Vienna 60,000 was the sum named; while at St. Petersburg it was definitely fixed at 80,000! Madame Le Brun declares that the true outlay was about 15 francs for the simple viands, the "properties" of her studio and the loans of her collector friends having provided all the *mise en scene*.

It was about this time (1787) that Madame Le Brun painted the Queen for the last time, on this occasion with her three children. Even this picture, with its massive gilt frame, was commented on as an unnecessary Court extravagance, though as a work of art it was universally approved. When the portrait was removed from the exhibition to the palace at Versailles, the artist was presented to Louis XVI., who had a long conversation with her, saying, as he looked at her presentment of his beautiful family:

"I know nothing about painting, but you make me love it."

A few days afterwards the king notified his desire to bestow on Madame Le Brun the order of Saint Michel, an honour which had never before been accorded to a woman, and only to men foremost in literature or art. But the nerve of this pretty genius was already shaking. She was of no heroic fibre; and she shrank from honours which might but serve to multiply the arrows of calumny and hatred directed at any favoured by the falling Court.

The picture of the Queen and her children was placed in one of the rooms at Versailles, through which Marie Antoinette used to pass daily on her way to and from chapel.

In 1789, the eldest boy, the first Dauphin died (happy in escaping the terrible experiences hanging over his home-circle). His loss so affected his mother, that she caused the picture to be removed to some obscure corner—a change which probably saved it from the furies of the revolutionary mobs who were soon to invade the palace. With thoughtful kindness the Queen herself caused it to be explained to Madame Le Brun why the picture was removed.

In short the artist was evidently treated as everybody's pet, a universal kindness and favour which seem to have sufficed her in lieu of any very deep affection.

When the political horizon darkened and her nerves shook more and more, kind friends and relatives took her to their own houses, to try to soothe her with a sense of security. But all failed. Libels were being poured out against her friends, against herself, against everybody who had ever had any dealings with the Court. Some such libels were ridiculous enough, but not the less dangerous. As one, against whom such were directed, wittily remarked :

"I am accused of stealing the towers of Notre Dame. They are still in their places. But I shall run away, nevertheless, for it is clear that people are very angry with me about it."

Madame Le Brun was seized with such a panic, that she too, resolved to run away, accompanied only by her little girl and a governess, under the pretext of carrying out a long-cherished desire to go to Rome. She had several unfinished portraits in her studio, among them one of a most beautiful woman (the Duchess de Noailles) for which she was offered a princely sum. But she would not delay even for the completion of these. "It was no longer a question," she said, "of means or of fortune. The only question was to save one's head."

It seems as if her decision had not been premature, for while she was in the midst of her packing, her rooms were invaded by a band of the National Guards, muskets in hand, and some of them drunk. They had come to command that the party should not leave the city.

Madame Le Brun never seemed able to give an exact account of what passed. Presently they went away, leaving her in a terrible fright. Two of them soon came back on a secret and friendly mission to advise her "To go, and to go instantly." They were neighbours who had known her in bright days, and they said :

"You cannot live here, madame, you are so changed already, that it grieves us to see you." But they warned her, "Do not travel in your carriage ; go by the diligence, it is the only safe way."

Madame Le Brun gratefully followed their advice, and re-arranged her plans of departure. But all polite Paris was in exodus, and it was a fortnight before a place could be secured in the diligence.

At last, on the 5th of October, when all Paris was in an uproar—for it was the day when a menacing mob brought the royal family from Versailles—Madame Le Brun was able to start. She travelled as a poor workwoman, in a coarse dress with a big, coloured handkerchief about her head. For fellow-travellers, the little party had two furious "patriots" breathing out blood and plunder. Madame Le Brun's little girl was so terrified by these men's talk, that the mother at last plucked up courage to ask them to desist for the sake of the child. To her surprise, even the most violent of the two instantly cooled down, produced some cards, began playing with the little girl, and made her laugh heartily !

To Madame Le Brun's horror, this man actually spoke about, and praised her own portrait painted by herself, then on exhibition at Paris ! Her disguise, however, saved her from recognition on that

occasion—though a few hours later, when in comparative safety, a friendly stranger recognised her in spite of it!

Every now and then, during this awful journey, riders passed them, shouting tales of all sorts of horrors, whose truth or falsehood the travellers could only conjecture. And at each town they reached, the provincials came crowding round the diligence to ask the last news from Paris, which the patriots gave out in their own fashion, their feelings and wishes being father to their facts.

But at last the little party were safe in Italy. Then began a twelve years' wandering in the courts of Europe. Madame Le Brun was a *fêted* guest in Vienna when she heard of the deaths of the king and queen, and her shallow, kindly heart, seems to have been particularly touched by the remembrance of the honours Louis would fain have showered on her, and which she in her cowardice had declined.

Hers was not a character made to shine in days of tragedy! She was but a butterfly, fit to sport in the sunshine. She had secured her own safety by leaving behind her mother and brother, whom she loved, if she loved anything, by deserting the court to which she owed so much loyalty, and by turning away from all the patrons and friends amongst whom she had disported herself so pleasantly.

Though she constantly alludes to her anxiety for her kindred and old friends, it was not of a type intense enough to prevent her enjoyment, not only of Art and Nature, but of any social gaiety which came in her way in the foreign capitals she visited.

Far different was she from one whose sweet face she had painted; the gentle Princesse de Lamballe, the queen's faithful friend, who was safe in Turin when the danger darkened, but who promptly returned to Paris, to stand by her Royal Mistress and to meet a horrible fate in her loving service. Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun was of quite another fibre. Not like a stately cedar spreading shelter, nor a brave pine defying tempests, rather like some pretty little flower, charming the world with radiant clusters of blossom, so slight as to fade in the first sharp wind, even though the roots may still cling vitally to the soil, and send out fresh blossoms in the sunshine of another season!

When Madame Le Brun left France in 1789, she was thirty-four years old, and she had painted 470 portraits and duplicates. She had earned more than a million of francs; and her husband had squandered all! She had not accepted every sitter who offered to employ her brush. She did not like faces which were unpleasing or expressionless. There were a certain wealthy and noble father and daughter whom on account of their exceeding plainness no bribe could induce her to accept; neither honied persuasions nor golden offers would tempt her! To be painted by her was fairly the rage. During her wanderings, she naturally increased her *clientèle*. She painted Marie Antoinette's sister, Queen Caroline of Naples, and also her favourite, Emma Lady Hamilton, whose shadow darkened

the spirit and blights the memory of Horatio Nelson. She painted the English Prince of Wales (George IV.) who had his portrait mounted on a stand with castors, like a cheval glass that it might be turned in any direction by the friend to whom he presented it. She painted Lady Wellesley and Lord Byron, Paul I. of Russia, Catherine the Great, and other royalties and beauties of Italy, Austria, Holland, Prussia and Belgium.

During Madame Le Brun's absence in Russia, the mother, whom she had left behind, died and was much sorrowed for. But if our artist had any very deep affection, it was for her own little daughter; and so it was there, as destiny so often decrees, that she was most deeply wounded.

When the "little brunette," as her mother called her, was seventeen years old, they were residing in St. Petersburg. The girl had been thoroughly spoiled; and the ever-shifting home, with its varied troop of new acquaintances, had not furnished the atmosphere in which rich and dutiful character thrives. She "fell in love" with a man nearly double her age, who appears to have been worthless in every sense. Madame Le Brun thoroughly disapproved of the marriage; but withheld her absolute veto, provided her husband, left in France, gave his consent. Awaiting this, the daughter pined and wounded her mother by coldness and suspicions. But what hurt the mother most was that, when the father's consent was got and the marriage carried out, her daughter's feelings proved to be of that frivolous kind which could easily fade into indifference, uttering such criticisms as these: "I confess this fur garment" (the husband was wearing a long overcoat) "disenchants me. How can I care for such a figure?"

At such a cheap rate had the heartless daughter disposed of her hard-working mother's counsels and happiness! What wonder that Madame Le Brun writes: "I took no longer the same pleasure in my daughter." Yet she presently nursed her through the then fearful malady of small-pox which she had never had herself; but evidently the close communion involved by this illness brought no healing to the mother's heart, for as soon as the daughter's recovery was assured, Madame Le Brun resolved to leave the land where she had suffered this blow and to return once more to France.

When Madame Le Brun reached Paris after an absence of twelve years it was her Paris no longer. Her husband made great upholstery preparations for her home-coming, "for which"—as she remarks with a not unnatural, and by no means intense, bitterness—"he paid with her own money." Napoleon, as First Consul, was at the Tuileries, and such festivities as went forward seemed to her heavy and conventional. However, when the pretty painter herself—charming still at forty-six—put in an appearance at the theatre, the audience applauded and even the musicians in the orchestra tapped their instruments.

Then again began the old round of honours and gaities. She, who had been somewhat ignobly content "to run away," had, at least, succeeded in

"Living to please another day."

Greuze the painter came to see her, Madame Buonaparte herself "called," the Comedie Francaise showed honourable courtesies. So the new Parisian society closed round the popular painter of the old *régime*. And she herself—Parisian to the core—seems to have been well satisfied. We hear of one little heart-sick retreat to a quiet country house, where she "need see nobody"; but, in general, she does not seem to have indulged in any regrets too deep to cast more than a becomingly pathetic shadow over her later life.

In 1802 she visited England for the first time and stayed here for nearly three years "detained," she says, "not merely by my pecuniary interests as a painter, but still more by the great kindness shown me." Indeed, she would not then have returned to France, then in the throes of the Napoleonic warfare, but for the arrival there of her daughter, whose husband had brought her over and had returned to Russia, and whose father's protection the anxious mother felt to be quite inadequate for a wilful deserted beauty, still considerably under thirty years of age. Madame Le Brun was destined never to have any comfort in her wilful child, who refused to live with her, and found her friends among people whom her mother would not receive.

M. Le Brun died in 1813. It was long since his wife had been separated from him, but she grieved sincerely for his death. She admitted however that this blow was nothing to the death of the idolised, unsatisfactory daughter in 1819.

"The naughtinesses of the poor little thing were all blotted out of my memory." So writes the mother of sixty-five of the woman who had passed her fortieth year. "I saw her as in the days of her childhood—as I see her now. . . . Alas! she was so young! Why did she not outlive me?"

With the death of her brother in the following year, the last of Madame Le Brun's near ties was severed. She herself survived to the year 1842. She remained at work until she was an old woman, and to the very last she maintained her pleasure in the light and social side of life. During her later years, she was able to secure a comfortable competency for her old age, and she divided her time between her house in Paris and her summer retreat in Louveciennes. She was tenderly cared for by two good nieces, one the daughter of her own dear brother, and the other, herself a distinguished artist, related on M. Le Brun's side of the house. She died at the age of eighty-seven, and was buried in the cemetery near her country abode.

It is said that she painted a total of 660 portraits, fifteen pictures, and nearly 200 landscapes,

She was certainly a genius and a charming woman, though possibly

not an heroic character. Without her genius, and with fortunate domestic surroundings, she would have certainly been a sweet, guileless, household fairy. Without her genius, and with such surroundings as she had, she would with equal certainty have been a miserable woman, and probably a source of misery and danger to all about her. But her genius gave her work, and work secured her independence, wholesome interests in life, and friends and associates. She herself wrote down that last clause as something to thank God for.



A MEMORY.

FROM SULLY PRUDHOMME.

Who says at eve—I have forgot the dawn?
And who, when years have come and gone, can say
The love that glorified youth's radiant morn
Has passed away?

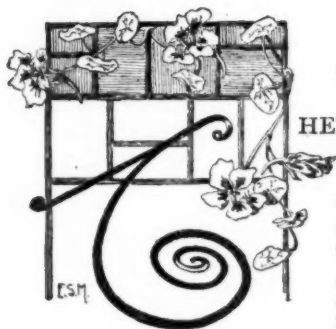
Do not our eyes the impress still retain
Of that which first called forth impassion'd tears?
Does not the first kiss come to life again
After long years?

When to the sunset rays succeeds the night,
Always on one spot in the boundless sky
The same star rises, and with steadfast light,
Burns constantly.

So in my heart—the wild world's noise—above—
With its eternal sweetness round me shed,
Rises the presence of my life's first love,
That I thought dead.

C. E. MEETKERKE.





THE THIRD TRAVELLER.

HERE is no need to mention my name, nor that of the firm which employs me, nor yet the particular errand on which I was sent by them to the south of France in the autumn of last year. These matters do not come into my story, which only commences at the precise moment when I met, for the first and last time, General Sir Stretton

Smith, at the *Couronne d'Or*, St. Hyacinthe les Bains.

There are two St. Hyacinthes, and through a blunder of our agents' I had come a hundred miles out of my way to the wrong one. There was nothing to be done but to get away as soon as possible. Unluckily it wasn't possible. The omnibus which had dragged me over seven miles of awful road zig-zagging up into the mountains, after setting me down, had lumbered away to return no more. St. Hyacinthe—a bit of a village with a mineral spring, discovered within the last six months by a fashionable Paris physician—had shut itself up and gone *en masse* to the fêtes at St. Something else and taken along with it everything that could run either on legs or wheels.

Not a cart, nor a horse, pony, mule nor ass was to be found; nor yet a telegraph office. I had a strained knee, that put walking back to the station out of the question; and when at last I resolved to possess my soul in patience and await the omnibus that would start next morning, I found that the *Couronne d'Or*, the only inn in the place, refused me admission.

The landlord, fat and brown, with a head like a blacking-brush, called Heaven and all the saints to witness how he was crushed—afflicted—desolated; but it was impossible. My so distinguished compatriot, "le Lor Smeet," with his family, his man-servants, maid-servants and cattle, occupied the whole hotel for the season, on the express condition that no other strangers were admitted within its gates. He had come here for the waters, and demanded absolute repose. Thus the landlord, bowing, grimacing and gesticulating amongst the potted orange-trees and oleanders of the sunny little courtyard, while I, hot and indignant, argued the point with him in my best public-school French to no purpose. I reasoned, expostulated, vehemently protested; I would write to the papers, I would appeal to the authorities, to the British Ambassador, to the House of Parliament.

At last, language failing me, I decided that the time for action had

come, and stalking straight through the glass doors of the *salle-à-manger*, down I sat, refusing to budge till I had been rested and fed.

The landlord followed, calling lustily on Heaven, the Maire, the police, without result (they were probably all engaged at the fêtes), then on Madame, who appeared on the instant and settled the affair in two words.

"But certainly! It was only Miladi who would make objection. Now if Monsieur would but give himself the trouble to make himself hidden for one little quarter of an hour, till Miladi and her party should have departed to the fêtes, all should be arranged. Dinner and all. Quick then! In there! Miladi descends!" And Madame, laughing with a pretty air of affected terror, hustled me off into a bit of an office behind the *salle-à-manger*, and shut me in before I knew what she would be at.

The office had a curtained window looking on the entrance hall, through which I ventured to peep with precaution. A great crashing of wheels on gravel and clattering of tongues was going on outside as "Lor Smeet's" great shining barouche with its great shining English horses and big solemn servants in smart liveries drew up to the door, followed by all the remaining inhabitants of St. Hyacinthe. Then appeared Miladi, a fine showy creature with a mass of fashionable hair and an up-to-date complexion, accompanied by a pale cross-looking girl with a certain likeness to herself. In attendance was a dark, sinister, expensive-looking Frenchman, who whispered something into the girl's ear as he handed her into the carriage while Miladi's head was turned, that made her smile wistfully. Who was he? Not "Lor Smeet" I imagined.

The visitors' book lay in the desk. I consulted it.

"Lieut.-Gen. Sir Stretton Smith, K.C.S.I." I knew that name well enough. It was the pride and glory of our family to have an uncle on his staff in India.

"The Lady Augusta Smith."

"Miss Viola Devenish."

Yes, it was the same. The General had married an earl's daughter, I remembered. Devenish was the family name; so the cross girl was some relation. The Frenchman's name did not appear.

They drove off, the Frenchman opening Miladi's parasol with an air of tenderest attention, while Miss Devenish looked crosser than before. Then came a further commotion. "Lor Smeet's" servants were also departing with their friends to the fêtes—two waggonette-loads of them. At the last minute a man came tearing downstairs calling to them to stop. He looked like a gentleman's servant, and was received with many exclamations of surprise and congratulation as they picked him up.

Then Madame came to release me. She had been as good as her word. Dinner was on the table smelling excellent. My departure was also arranged for. It was quite simple. I had but to take my way along a certain road till I came to a certain cabaret some two

miles beyond the town, where I must wait till the mail-cart passed at eight o'clock, and the driver, if I made it worth his while, would convey me with the mails to the station in time for the night train to Paris.

I went as far as my French would allow in acknowledgments to Madame. She graciously permitted me to button her glove—she wore the smartest *toilette de fête* that I had seen since I left Paris—and between the top button and the bottom told me the whole history of “Lor Smeet” and his family. He had come to St. Hyacinthe a dying man at the last extremity. It was a spinal malady. He could stir neither hand nor foot, and was speechless. Miladi’s devotion to him was everything there is of most angelic. Night or day she would hardly be persuaded to leave him, even to the care of his faithful servant M. Alexandre. And now, behold a miracle! He speaks, he sits upright in his chair, he even moves his hands a little. That very day he had found himself so well, so strong, that he had given permission at the last moment to M. Alexandre to assist at the fêtes. Her husband would take his place by the General. Here a carriage full of smart friends arrived to take her away, and “Lor Smeet,” the landlord and I, had the *Couronne d’Or* to ourselves.

Dinner ended, I was killing time in the empty courtyard, smoking and tossing biscuit-crumbs to the gasping gold-fish in the fountain, when a window on the first floor was flung open, and there appeared my landlord in a violent state of agitation calling and beckoning.

“Monsieur! Monsieur! In the name of Heaven, come at once! Ah, what misfortune! A frightful catastrophe has just happened.”

“Apoplexy,” I said to myself, and dashed indoors and upstairs.

There were turnings and odd steps and passages; but by some instinct I went straight for the right door, which swung open as I reached it, and the landlord, with a face white as a tablecloth, and a broken physic-bottle in his hand, shot out, impelled by an explosion of vigorous language in some eastern tongue. It came from a great arm-chair in the window, where sat a huge old man, or the wreck of one. The mighty chest was sunken, and the great, sinewy, hairy hands dangled limply out of the sleeves of his flannel dressing-gown. His face was bleached as white as his great beard; but his eyes! They turned on me suddenly, flashing yellow like a tiger’s, and for a second I felt like bolting after the landlord. However, he spoke quite civilly.

“Much obliged to you for coming. We’re in a difficulty here. I speak no French, and this fellow can’t understand English. He’s broken my bottle of medicine, and I ought to take the stuff every two hours. I can’t make him see that all he has to do is to get the prescription out of the top drawer over there and take it to the chemist’s. I know Alexandre gets it made up somewhere near. It’s quite a simple thing.”

I found the prescription, and turned the landlord’s dolour into joy. He understood perfectly—had been before with M. Alexandre—the chemist was a friend of his, and by good fortune at home to-day.

"Tell him that he must be back by seven. You will be so kind as to stay with me till he returns?"

It was open to me to object, of course; but I had no inclination to do so with Sir Stretton's eyes fixed on me. So I dismissed the landlord on his errand, and he tripped off light-heartedly, hugging the bottle.

Sir Stretton kept silence till we heard his footsteps descend the stair.

"Fasten the door, if you please. Will you tell me your name?"

I did so, and mentioned my uncle.

"You're one of the right sort if you are like him. If I only had him here this minute. See here, sir. Will you help a dying man to do a righteous act with no profit to yourself, and the chance of some danger?"

"If it will not interfere with my duty to my employers, I will."

"You shall decide for yourself. Years ago I had the chance of setting a wrong to rights, and I shirked it. Now here I am, crippled and incapable, given over into the hands of those who are resolved that the secret shall never be told by me; tied hand and foot; watched night and day; brought here to die, away from all my friends, from anyone who speaks my language. I tell you I could have shouted for joy when I heard an English voice in the courtyard this afternoon."

I have no doubt that he *did* hear it; but he wasn't paying much of a compliment to my French, was he?

"What do you want me to do for you?"

"I want you to write down and witness what I have to say. It's a death-bed confession. There is a man in England who must have it. You may run some risk in taking it; there are one or two who would kill you rather than it should ever fall into his hands—if they know. But decide, man! In Heaven's name decide! The time is going—my strength may go too at any moment. Are you afraid?"

"I'll take it," I cried recklessly, as any fellow would who had seen the piteous look in those great fierce eyes. I whipped out my memorandum book and pen. "Go on, sir."

I can't well be expected to tell what he confided to me. The family history that followed was so amazing that a mere hint of it would scatter confusion from one end of the country to the other. It began with a hideous bit of wrong-doing two generations ago, in hushing up which some of the highest in the land were concerned, and, the consequences spreading wider with each year that passed, now affected directly or indirectly many of our noblest families. With this Sir Stretton had nothing to do; his share in the evil was simply that of inheriting the secret and keeping it.

When the knowledge came to him he was a young man, low down in the Service and madly in love. To reveal it would have meant utter ruin, socially and professionally. He was not strong enough to face it, and so reluctantly joined the conspiracy of silence, to his

never-ending shame and regret. Now that he was dying, childless and wealthy, his wife fairly provided for, he saw a chance of making partial restitution in one or two cases, while his statement would enable his old friend to enforce righteous dealing on some of the others implicated.

"Larry will see justice done," he gasped; "but the proofs—he will want the proofs. You shall take them to him."

He had been speaking fast in an odd, strained voice that alarmed me; now and then it failed and broke, and the words came tumbling out unintelligibly, but he forced himself to continue. I had a flask of whiskey with me, and, with some misgivings, poured him out a few drops, which he swallowed greedily. "Fetch me that," he said, pointing to a great Bible which stood on a stand at his elbow. I thought he was going to swear or to make me swear something, but he only opened one of the covers. They were the thickest and heaviest I have ever seen. Leather as thick as the sole of your boot with a big brass clasp, lined inside with watered silk stamped in gold.

"Can you get me some boiling water?"

A wood fire was smouldering on the hearth and a little earthenware pipkin stood near it. I blew the embers to a blaze and set the pot on to boil. Meanwhile, I read over what I had written to him, and held it for him to sign. He seized the pen and traced waveringly but distinctly his signature in full, with a curious flourish at the end. "Larry will know that," he said triumphantly, and then I witnessed it.

The water boiled furiously before we had done, and he made me hold one of the covers of the great Bible in the steam. The silk lining curled at the edge and I gently loosened it further with my knife. Underneath it, in the thickness of the board, a hiding-place had been hollowed out for several sheets of paper, yellow and discoloured, as if they had lain there for many years.

"There should be three letters—two certificates of marriage and one of birth—and a small folded paper with a few lines of writing and several signatures attached."

I checked them off as he named them, then fastened the silk down again, and left the book to dry. He was speaking with difficulty now, and I followed his directions more by guess than by words. I was getting horribly afraid of the landlord's return, and still more afraid of what might happen first.

I gave him more whiskey. At any cost I must have the name and address of his friend to whom I was to convey this perilous stuff.

"Major-General Herbert Lawrence, United Service Club. In Pall Mall, you know. If you cannot find him there—if he hasn't got back from India, ask at Cox's, they'll know." The spirit began to burn in his cheeks and once more his voice grew strong and clear. "Tell Larry how you found me. It's no use his coming—he would

be too late. I've had my warnings—this return of strength is one. God knows how I have prayed for it—for strength and a friend to help me, and now both have been granted me and the chance of using them. You will tell Larry about my will. It was made many years ago and is safe at my lawyers, you have the address there. If he hears nothing about it, if he finds it has been suppressed, he will know what to do. I've left him my collection of arms and armour. There is a jewelled dirk that I should like him to give you——”

“Never mind that!” I interrupted, for his voice was dropping into a feeble murmur and his face had a queer, streaky look that I did not like. “I must put these up safely. I want some paper.”

He looked towards a writing-desk on a table near, a lady's evidently.

I helped myself to some scented paper with the address of a country-house stamped on it. There was wax there too, so when I had tied up the parcel I sealed it twice with a great signet ring that was hanging at Sir Stretton's watch-chain.

“There, that's safe,” I said, “and it doesn't leave me till I give it into General Herbert Lawrence's own hand.”

“Tell Larry to stand by me dead as he has stood by me living. Tell him I shall not rest in my grave till justice is done.” His voice sank again into a meaningless mutter and I sat down and wished with all my soul for the return of the landlord.

He was not long, quite in time for the dose to be administered. I took upon myself to recommend that he should not mention the accident to anyone, to which he joyfully assented; then I bade Sir Stretton adieu. All the light had faded out of his great fierce eyes and his hand hung lifeless, only when I tapped the pocket that held the papers he gave one glance of intelligence and his limp fingers essayed to tighten on mine.

I caught the mail-cart, and the mail-cart caught the train. It was satisfactory to feel that the miles were lengthening between me and St. Hyacinthe with every few minutes. I wondered how long my visit there would remain a secret. So long and no longer had I the chance of getting off safe to England with my deposit. The more I thought the story over, the stronger grew my conviction of the certainty that every effort would be made to suppress it—and me. That yellow-haired Lady Augusta—Sir Stretton's directions would deprive her of the great mass of the wealth she expected to inherit, while her admirer, that black-a-vised Frenchman, was, as Sir Stretton had said cynically, only waiting for his death to decide between her and her niece, an heiress of sorts. They were both accomplices of Alexandre, his man, an agent of somebody in England, set over him as a watch to see that he died with the story untold. It was truly a nest of vipers that I had stirred up. It would be a chance if I got off scot-free. I would buy a belt directly I got to Paris, and strap the parcel safely round my waist. I would carry a revolver. Above

all, I would rush my business as much as was consistent with duty and get back to England and General Lawrence. I did think of registering and posting the parcel to him, but felt that every attempt would be made to intercept it, and dared not let it out of my hands.

I found orders waiting me in Paris that would detain me a week at least. By good luck the bearer was a son of the firm, a great, strong, public schoolboy, to whom I was directed to give an insight into the work. I made him stick close to me day and night, and tried not to let that abominable packet get on my nerves. It did in some degree, I think. I got to fancy I was shadowed about the different towns we visited; that stray travellers took an unaccountable interest in our movements; that it was safest to travel by the most frequented routes, and to keep my room door fast every night with a special dodge of my own invention.

My last day in France arrived. I persuaded my companion to see me off by the Boulogne boat before he proceeded to our correspondent's at Lille. He bought an English paper as we started from Paris, and looking, as I always did, at the column of "deaths," I found what I had so long expected, the name of General Sir Stretton Smith and the date of his death four days previously. Four days ago! Something must have been discovered by this time I was sure; possibly earlier. Some rambling words of the General, some indiscretion on the part of the host or Madame, would be enough to see the watchers of the dying man on my track, and then—— The probabilities gave me matter for reflection during the rest of the journey.

It was a dull grey evening, with a wicked wind blowing and hourly increasing in strength. The weather forecasts had been so ominous that several out of the small number of our passengers declined to cross, and for those who did adventure there followed a three-hours' purgatory. Before we were half-way across my sole companion on deck became the most abject spectacle of wretchedness I ever beheld. He stayed there only out of sheer inability to rise from his seat, looking out from his railway-rug with a ghastly green face that got greener when he looked at me and saw I was enjoying myself. Poor beggar; I knew how he felt, and tried not to be ostentatiously jolly. Presently, however, a lurch took me unawares and threw me down on the seat beside him, while my favourite briar-root shot from my lips across the deck and disappeared for ever.

"Hard luck," he gasped between his groans. Then, after fumbling a bit, he pulled out a cigar-case. "Try this," he managed to say.

This was shovelling coals of fire on my head I felt, and I thanked him heartily, feeling my gratitude glowing warmer and warmer with each whiff I drew of the choicest and most fragrant cigar I ever put a light to. It lasted through the rest of the crossing, and when we proposed to go ashore I was only too glad to have a chance of

obliging him in return. He was fairly cramped and helpless, and I had actually to lift him to his feet and drag him on to the pier.

"Do you mind putting me into a carriage?" he asked. "I am afraid to be left alone."

The guard found an empty compartment, and we laid him at length on the seat. It was the express train to town, and the guard took care that no one should get in with us.

He wasn't a lively companion, lying out limp and speechless opposite; but he was civil. "Have another cigar. You'll like this one better than the last, if you don't mind rather a full flavour." He selected one out of a handful and offered it me, then turned over on his side and went to sleep.

It was curious tobacco certainly, or perhaps my head was still a little queer from the pitching and tossing. I began to grow sleepy—deliciously sleepy—with an odd, pleasant numbness stealing over every limb. That was the change from the battering sea-wind to the warm, stuffy carriage, I thought. I would have opened the window, but my legs refused to stir. My small portmanteau stood on the seat beside me. I slid down sideways till my elbow rested on it and my head on my hand. The smoke seemed to get into my eyes and ears and wrap me round in a comfortable woolly vapour; my head went niddle-noddling forward, and the cigar slipped from my lips; but I made no effort to catch it. Presently I was conscious that my fellow-traveller was up and about. What a fidget he was to be sure! Closing that last inch of window just as if there *could* be any draught. He shut up both ventilators and then stooped and looked at me. I shut my eyes tight to avoid the fatigue of talking, but opened them when he moved away and lazily watched him. He was unscrewing a little brass box, which I recognised as a lamp for heating curling-irons; I had seen it at the hairdresser's. Was he going to trim his moustache, or what? Perhaps to brew himself some tea or soup somehow.

He poured in the methylated spirit and lighted it, then carefully measured out of a little bottle some darkish stuff and dropped it on the flame. Holding the lamp at arm's length, he placed it on the portmanteau and shoved it towards my face. Did he want to fumigate me, and why? With a sudden effort I managed to twist my face up so as to get a view of him. He was shrinking into the farthest corner holding his handkerchief over his nose and mouth. I felt I must have this explained; but meanwhile the blue vapour from the lamp was drifting in pale clouds around me, filling every breath I took with a sweet suffocating flavour, altogether delicious, something like the cigar, only more powerful. My limbs from being numb grew leaden. I could not have stirred a finger to save my life. Still I was not insensible; though a drowsy dulness suffused my brain, one corner of it—one tiny patch of brain matter—felt alert and watchful though powerless. I knew when the man in the corner began to stir, and I

saw him bending over me holding his handkerchief over his mouth and nostrils. He rested one hand on my forehead and lifted up my eyelid with his thumb. I did not resent it; I was quite indifferent as to what became of me. Then he carefully and deliberately felt me all over, my breast and my sides, till he came to my belt. Round and round me went his fingers prodding and rubbing till he found what he wanted. I couldn't lift an eyelid in protest—didn't want to.

Luckily I was doubled up awkwardly for his purpose and he could do nothing with one hand. Besides, I seemed to see that in spite of the cover over his mouth, the vapour was taking effect upon him, and he swayed about dizzily. He staggered back to his far corner and lowered the window for a moment—only a moment, not long enough to do me any good. He then tied the handkerchief over his face, so as to leave both hands at liberty and approached me again. This time he lifted me easily, and when I tried to speak, began to unfasten my waistcoat—or I thought he did, I could not be sure. Black darkness closed in upon me surging up like a sea and swallowing me—I was lost—I was dead.

Then came a sound like thunder and a shock as of a pail of iced water flung over me. I suppose one was the grinding of the break as the train was brought to a stand, and the other the rush of night air into the carriage when the door opened.

I sat up and blinked around. My fellow-traveller was angrily expostulating with the guard. "Beg pardon, sir!" I heard the man say.

He slammed the door, but not till a tall man wearing a heavy black cloak had passed in and taken the seat opposite to mine. His hat was pulled over his eyes, and his collar turned up so that I could not catch a glimpse of his face.

Either he or I knocked over the little lamp, and it rolled away under the seat.

My fellow-traveller stooped and picked it up without any attempt at concealment.

"Rather startling that stoppage," he said, smiling at me. "Some local swell or director wanted to be picked up. It's a way they have on this line. Glad it's nothing worse; I thought we had smashed something! Startled you too, didn't it?"

"It woke me up. I wasn't sorry," I said grimly. "I had some queer dreams. I don't think that stuff you were burning is wholesome."

"My inhaler? I'm awfully sorry if you noticed it. I have such hideous attacks of asthma that I am obliged to use it at all sorts of times. It is quite harmless I believe."

"But you were covering your face and keeping as clear of it as you could," I objected.

"I was holding my nose in the smoke as long as I could stand it," he declared, looking angry and astonished. "I beg pardon for

placing it on your portmanteau. It wasn't steady on the seat. I turned your face away from it. You must have been dreaming."

"Perhaps it was a dream that I felt you punching and poking all over me?" I retorted. "I'll swear you did!"

He looked very serious.

"I see you mean to quarrel with me about something. I declare most solemnly I don't understand why. I did nothing to you, unless"—with a laugh—"it was in my sleep. I have had a mis-giving about that last stuff I got. I fancied there was something unusual mixed with it, opium or soothing stuff. That would account for our dreams, would it not? Well, here it goes," and he flung the flask out of the window, and then put the fumigator away in his bag with such an open honest air, that I began to mistrust my own senses.

"It *is* queer, certainly," I said, laughing a little. He laughed too, got up and stretched himself again in his corner.

The new-comer had paid no attention to either of us, but sat upright and dark—a silent presence. I felt happier at having him there, and began to cast about for something to say to him. I'm naturally sociable and generally get on with the people I brush up against in the world; but whether it was sleepiness or that inhaling stuff, not a word would come out, and we all sat mute while the dark country outside rushed past the steaming windows with only now and then the lights of some small station flashing by.

I felt I was growing queer and nervous and jumpy sitting bolt upright before this dark stranger, watching for a movement, a gleam of his eyes, or even the stir of his breath in the long white moustache that fell over his mouth—anything—just show that it *was* a man, and a living man sitting opposite me.

My fellow-traveller presently crossed over and sat down at the other end of the portmanteau.

"I owe you a supper for those bad dreams," he said, laughingly. "Where are you going when we reach town? Anywhere in particular? No? Well, come with me to my club," and he named a very smart one, where I should have liked to have gone uncommonly.

"I'm afraid I can't," I said reluctantly; "I've had a long day and don't feel like anything but going home straight to bed."

"Then you'll dine with me to-morrow? Or will any other day suit you better?" he persisted so pleasantly that I should have felt myself a boor to refuse.

"I could come on Saturday. I shall be at liberty then."

"Ah, you will be at liberty on Saturday," he repeated, still smiling. "I'll make a note of that," and he began to fumble in the breast-pocket of his overcoat.

I don't know what made me get up just then and change to the seat opposite him. The train jerked and nearly sent me lurching on the stranger, but he took no notice.

My fellow-traveller still held his hand in his breast. "I wonder what the time is? My watch has stopped. We ought to be getting in soon."

I drew out my watch and looked at it. As I did so there was a sharp report and a burning smart cut across the side of my forehead and into my hair. Another report and I had caught the man's wrist and we were locked together in a desperate struggle for the possession of the smoking revolver.

I kept him from using it, but he gripped me tight and was bearing me down. He was a stronger man than I could have guessed and heavier than I, but I was younger and desperate. I felt that if he once got the better of me I knew what to expect.

That other man—what was he doing? An accomplice?

My foot slipped and I fell sideways on the seat, while my adversary wrenched his hand free.

"Help!" I cried at last. "Help! Don't see me murdered!" I felt my opponent's grip relax, and with a violent effort flung him off. The revolver fell with a thump between my feet. I pounced upon it.

"Now then, what's the meaning of this?" I demanded, but I got no answer. The man had dropped back on the seat, his eyes were rolling and his jaw had fallen. He was breathing hard and jerkily.

"Have I hurt you? It was his own doing, you know," I said, turning to appeal to the stranger.

"Who is he?" gasped my adversary, grabbing at my hand. "Look there! Where did he come from? What does it mean?"

The stranger stood upright in the middle of the carriage. His cloak had fallen back, and his long white beard floated over his great sunken chest. From under his black shaggy eyebrows his fierce yellow eyes flashed from one of us to the other.

"My master! Sir Stretton!" he choked, and his head dropped forward. A great cold seemed to freeze me, and I sank down beside him, weak as water. This man was my enemy, but he was flesh and blood like myself, while that other——

I loosened the man's scarf and collar presently, keeping my head turned from the figure. He drew a long breath, and his eyes opened; they turned to my face in an agony of terror, and he clutched my arm to prevent my leaving his side. I had no fear of him now.

How long we sat thus together I do not know, but the train stopped at last, the door opened, and the tall dark shape passed out before us into the night.

The collector stood at the door demanding our tickets.

"Did you see that gentleman? Where did he go?" I asked.

"What gentleman? Anyone travelling without a ticket?" The man spoke surlily as if he suspected a bad joke. "No one got out here that I saw."

The train moved on to the platform, and my fellow-traveller left me without another word. I watched him from curiosity. He made his way to a brougham that was in waiting. A lady looked eagerly out as he came up. She wore a thick crape veil, but I caught a glint of tawny hair in the lamp-light, and beside her I saw a dark sinister face that I had seen once before at the *Couronne d'Or*.

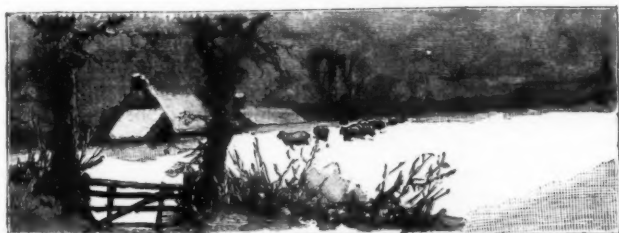
I sent my luggage to the cloak-room, and, once clear of the station, dodged across the street at its most crowded part, hopped into an omnibus just moving off, changed to another which took me to the opposite end of the town, where I looked up a medical student friend who put me up for the night.

Before the next day was over the papers were safe in the hands of General Lawrence, and my part in the story was ended. What use he made of them, whether he ever needed to use them at all, or how Sir Stretton's dying wishes were carried out, I have never heard. General Lawrence behaved very handsomely to me, promised me the jewelled dirk, and gave me a piece of advice on his own account.

"Forgive me for not attaching much importance to that incident of the railway journey. I don't think I'd mention it if I were you. You had had an anxious time, you see—had been much concerned about the execution of your commission, had you not? Well, suppose—mind, I only say suppose—that your asthmatic friend had given you one of his medicated cigars by mistake, or that you had taken some extra allowance of stimulant?—quite pardonable under the circumstances."

"You mean that I was either drunk or dreaming, General? I'll swear I was neither one nor the other, and if I tell the story at all I shall tell the whole of it."

We parted friends, and he sent me the jewelled dirk after all.



THE GARDEN OF SPAIN.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN LOTUS LAND,"
"MEMORIALS OF MRS. HENRY WOOD," ETC., ETC.



VALENCIA.

WITH a heavy heart we turned our backs one morning upon Tarragona.

Though bound for Valencia, Tarragona the delightful possessed charms Valencia could never rival. Not again should we meet with such a cathedral, such cloisters, or even such an original and enthusiastic Sacristan. We were leaving all that wonderful historical atmosphere that made this exceptional place a Dream of the Past.

We had stood near the tomb of the Scipios and fancied ourselves back in the days when our own era was dawning. Before us the ever-changing yet changeless sea looked just as it must have looked when

they, loving it, decided to sleep within sound of its waters. In a last moonlight visit to the cathedral, we had waited and listened in hope of hearing Quasimodo's footsteps; of seeing his quaint and curious form approaching.

He never came. No unseen talisman whispered to him our desire. Perhaps it was as well. A second experience is never the same as the first. The subtle charm of the new and the strange, the unexpected, the unprepared, is no longer there. Quasimodo now dwelt in our minds as a being spiritual, intangible, of another world. That he belonged to the highest order in this, is certain. The influence of

his music haunted us, haunts us still. In our waking and sleeping dreams we live over and over again the weird charms and experiences of that wonderful night ; see the moonbeams falling in shafts of clear-cut light across pillars and aisles and arches ; hear and feel the touch, as of a passing breath, of the ghostly visitants from Shadow-land. All the marvellous music steals into our soul. There can be but one Quasimodo in the world. We doubt if there was ever another at any time endowed with his marvellous faculty. It was pain and grief to feel that we should see and hear him no more.

Our very host added slightly to our reluctant leaving by declaring that if we would only stay another week, he would charge us half-price for everything : nay, we should settle our own terms. Francisco was inconsolable, but perhaps a little selfishness was mixed with his sorrow.

"No more holidays," he cried. "No more excursions to Poblet ; no escape from French lessons. And yet, señor, there are other places besides Poblet, and every one of them would have delighted you. Think of all the luncheons lost ; all the first-class compartments that will now be empty. There are lovely excursions, too, by sea." The boy's catalogue of grievances was as long as Don Giovanni's list of transgressions.

But time the inexorable refused to stand still, and when the final hour struck, the relentless omnibus carried us away.

Francisco accompanied us to the station, having an idea that without his help we should inevitably go wrong. He was a witness to the abominable rudeness of the station-master, who in this respect has not his equal in Spain, according to our experience. Finally we moved off.

At the moment we felt a distinct mental wrench. Tarragona was indeed over. To our right was the harbour with its little crowd of fishing-boats. Out on the sea lovely white-winged feluccas glided to and fro. The whole journey was one of extreme beauty. Very soon we had the sea on our left. Often the train skirted the very waves as they rolled over their golden sands. The coast was broken and diversified, now rising to hills and cliffs ; now falling to a level with the shore. Where we passed inland, the country was rich and fruitful, showing more and more the luxuriance of the South.

Many of the towns had historical interests or remains to make them remarkable. At Hospitalet we found ourselves on the site of a House of Refuge for pilgrims from Zaragoza who, in the Middle Ages, were wont to cross the mountains in caravans after visiting the scene of some miraculous pillar or image. Near this we skirted a fishing village, where the train was almost washed by the sea, that, blue and flashing, stretched far and wide. The little fleet was moving out of the small harbour as we passed, each followed by its shadow upon the water. Picturesque Amposta was the centre and atmosphere of the lost centuries. It existed long before the Romans,

who, on taking it, made it one of their chief stations. Here came Hercules, and after him St. Paul, most wonderful of men, who did much work here and ordained a bishop to carry on his labours. Later came the Moors, when it reached the height of its glory. In 809 Louis le Débonnaire, son of Charlemagne, besieged it, was repulsed, returned in 811 and conquered. The Moors quickly retook it, but the disorganised inhabitants had become nothing better than pirates. So in 1148 the Templars came down upon them, and inspired by the late victory at Almeria, aided by the Italians, conquered in their turn : only to be turned out again the following year by the inevitable Moors.

Everywhere the eye rested upon a lovely scene of river, sea and land, intensely blue sky and brilliant sunshine. In our carriage we had a very interesting bride and bridegroom. She seemed to worship the very ground he trod upon, and both were evidently in paradise. At the same time he accepted the worship rather too much as his due—gracefully and graciously, but still distinctly his right. They were in the mood to admire lovely scenery, and undertones of delight were frequent.

Presently an old priest entered the carriage, sat himself down beside us, and they quickly fell under his eye. He looked on with a smile of amusement at the silent, unmistakable worship. We thought he drew his conclusions as one who observes a scene in which he has no part or lot.

"Love's young dream," he said to us under cover of the rattle of the train. "My experience tells me it is only a dream, varying in length according to the constancy of the dreamers. You think I have no right to give an opinion? Then, señor, I should tell you that like the world in general, you judge by appearances and you judge too hastily. That is the difference between impressions and appearances. Of first appearances beware; of first impressions be assured. They have never failed me."

We agreed with the old priest, whose experience was our own, but we made no remark.

"You think I have no business to judge of these matters," he continued with a smile; "and you are mistaken. I was not always a priest clad in black robe and beaver hat, separated from the world by the barrier of the Church. In early life I took up law, pleaded, and generally won my cause. Then I pleaded my own cause with a beautiful woman, won her and married her. I too dwelt in my fool's paradise; thought the world all sunshine, the hours all golden. I was young, and in those days handsome. Never can I reconcile the ugly, grey-headed man one becomes in age, with the charm and elegance of one's youth. But time has no mercy. However, the fact remains that in those days I was young and handsome."

The old priest was handsome still; but again we were silent.

"Then one fine morning I awoke to realities," he went on. "The

angel with the flaming sword had come and driven me out of my paradise. Yet I had not transgressed. It was the woman, whom I fondly hoped heaven had given me as a life-long companion. She was beautiful; there was an indescribable charm about her; but she



ANCIENT GATEWAY, VALENCIA.

was frivolous and inconstant. She left me one day with one whom I had thought my friend. He was rich and free to roam. I heard of them in other countries: wandering to and fro like spirits ill at ease.

"Finally they went to Rome. Was it a judgment upon the wife who

had proved faithless to her husband, the man who had betrayed his friend? Both took the fever at the same time and both died within a week of each other. They were buried side by side in a small cemetery near to the Eternal City. Some years after I went to Rome. I had lived down my life's tragedy and could gaze upon their graves with calmness. As I did so, and felt the certainty of retribution, I prayed that I might judge in mercy. They had blighted my life, but looking on those nameless graves I felt for the first time that I could fully and freely forgive. Yes, the graves were nameless, for no stone had been placed over them. This I did. By way of inscription I merely recorded the initials on each: and the text 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.'

"That very same day I was wandering about the English cemetery in Rome, and came upon the text 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water;' doubtless the expression of one whose life had been a failure or a disappointment. 'My friend,' I thought, 'you are not to be pitied half so much as those whose names are writ in Sin.'

"It was about this time that I determined to enter the Church. Since that terrible blow I had grown to hate the world, to withdraw more and more from society. I had no near ties on earth. I thanked heaven again and again that no child had been born to me. As soon as I had made the resolution I put it in force. I cannot say that I ever regretted it. Gradually all morbidness left me. I lead a busy life; I delight in society; people consider me a very jovial old priest. But I never lift a finger to promote a marriage; I never solemnise one without a sigh and a wonder as to what will be the end of it. And let me tell you a secret. I never hear in the Confessional that love is on the wane between husband and wife, without pouring out upon them the sternest vials of my wrath, and threatening them with all the terrors of purgatory if so much as a breath of inconstancy of mind or thought is whispered. Oh, if I were not pledged to silence, what Romances of the Confessional could I not tell you!"

We had listened without interruption. Sitting side by side it was easy to talk without being overheard. The train clattered and beat and throbbed on its way. The happy pair were at the other end of the carriage. H. C., who sat opposite to us instead of giving his undivided attention to the scenery, was composing a sonnet to the fair lady, which he headed, "To Eve in Paradise"—a questionable compliment. Tortosa, with its narrow streets and gloomy palaces, its strong walls and ancient castle and bridge of boats, all visible from the train, had passed away. One lovely view gave place to another.

"It is indeed a rich country through which we are travelling," said the old priest, "the very Garden of Spain, which appears to me to find its culminating point round about Valencia. Our whole progress is marked by historical footsteps. I never visit Tortosa without thinking of St. Paul. A little of his amazing energy seems to fall upon me. He becomes a real presence to me. An influence he must

and will be in all places and in all ages. There comes Vinaroz with its crumbling walls—one of the loveliest spots in the whole province. I always think its people are like mermen, neither one thing nor the other. They fish the sea and plough the land by turns. Both occupations yield them good fruit, so perhaps they are wise. The fish are abundant, the lampreys excellent. It was here that the Duc de Vendôme died from a surfeit of fish, of which he was passionately fond. But for this, Philip V. would probably never have entered upon his long and eventful reign. Look at those white-winged boats gliding upon the blue waters! Where is there another sea like the Mediterranean? It is the very cradle of history and romance; the scene of half the mighty events of the world. Were I an idle man I would spend my life upon its surface."

"What is that distant object?" we asked, indicating an enormous perpendicular rock some five miles away, that stood a picturesque, castle-crowned islet round which the sea was breaking in faint white lines.

"We call it Gibraltar of the West," replied the priest. "An interesting place to visit, and larger than you would imagine, with its 3000 inhabitants. They are curious people: in some things almost a race apart. It is neither an island nor yet part of the mainland. You cannot gain entrance by water, though surrounded by the sea. The only passage to it is a narrow strip of sand reaching to the shore. It was here that Pope Benedict XIII. took refuge after the Council of Constance had pronounced against him. And here comes Benicarlo with its old walls," he continued, as the train drew up at the small station. "The ancient town is worth a visit. Its people, poor and wretched, might be flourishing and well-to-do, for the neighbourhood is wonderfully productive. The vineyards are amongst the best in Spain; the luscious wines are sent to Bordeaux to mix with inferior clarets, which find their way to the English market. Ah! the English little know what adulterated articles are sold in England that the French would never look at."

At this moment, our fair Eve, who for the last few minutes had come out of paradise, looked attentively at the priest, hesitated a moment, then spoke.

"From the singular likeness," she said, "I think you must be related to the Duke de Nevada in Madrid? Forgive me if I am mistaken."

"Señora," replied the old priest with a polite bow, "Juan de Nevada is my elder and much-loved brother, though we seldom meet—for Madrid is the one place I never visit. I am gratified that you see in me the least resemblance to that truly noble and great man."

"Have you never heard him speak of the Señor de Castello?" continued the lady.

"Without doubt," returned the priest. "They are neighbours in Madrid. 'I have heard him mention a very charming daughter, and also very charming cousin who lives in Gerona.'"

"I am that charming daughter," laughed the fair Eve; "but the term applies much more correctly to my lovely cousin. Her beauty has created a furore in Madrid. We are great friends, and she stays with us part of every year. She has just become engaged to your brother's eldest son, and therefore some day will be Duchess of Nevada—though I trust the day is far distant. You have doubtless heard of the engagement?"

"Indeed yes," returned the priest. "Only last week I wrote my nephew a long letter congratulating him upon his good fortune. But how comes it, madame, if I may be so indiscreet, that my fair travelling companion should not herself eventually have become Madame de Nevada?"

"For the excellent reason that sits opposite to me," quickly replied this lovely Eve, laughing and blushing in the most bewitching manner. Upon which she introduced her husband to the priest as Count Pedro de la Torre.

The name explained what had puzzled us for some time. We were haunted by a feeling of having met this young man in a previous state of existence, but now discovered that we had really met him in Toledo. He was amongst the group who had sat that first night of our arrival at the other end of the table, smoking and drinking wine and coffee. He it was who had come forward to speak to the man in the sheepskin, and then handed him a bumper of wine. He had left the very next day, and we had seen less of him than of the others.

We recalled the circumstance to his memory.

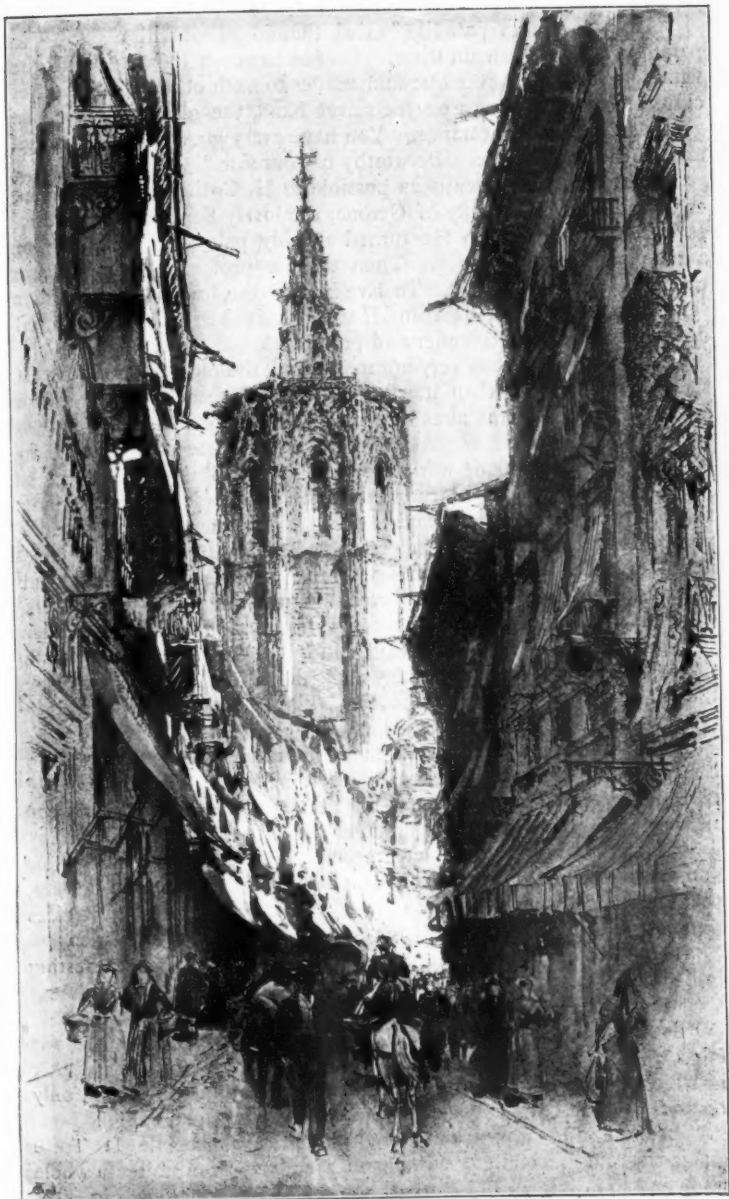
"I recognised you at once," he said, "but thought you had forgotten me. That man in the sheepskin was my father's head huntsman: a privileged being who was born and brought up on the estate and gave us our first lessons in sport and looks upon us as his own children. My father's place—my own, I fear, before long—is near Toledo. If ever you visit it again we should be delighted to show you hospitality. We live with my father, when we are not in Madrid. He is old and in failing health, and could not bear the idea of my leaving home. On my part I was too glad to remain in the dear old nest."

"And we see that we have to offer you our congratulations," we said, bowing as in duty bound to his lovely partner.

De la Torre laughed. "You make me your debtor," he replied. "But however profound your congratulations, they can never equal those I offer to myself. I am indeed far more blest than I merit."

"Wait," laughed madame, "until I show you my true character, take the reins of government into my own hands, and leave you with no will of your own—a henpecked husband. At present I tender you a velvet hand; presently it may turn into——"

"If it turned into a cloven foot," he interrupted gallantly, "I should still say it was perfect."



A STREET IN VALENCIA.

"Ah, you are in paradise," cried the old priest with a sigh; "in paradise. Try to remain there. Do not summon the angel with the flaming sword. Be ever true and tender to each other. Talk not of cloven feet. Let it ever be the velvet hand, the glance of love, the gentle accents of forbearance. You have every good gift that heaven and earth can give you. Be worthy of your fate."

We interpreted as gently as possible to H. C. the sad news of the engagement of the beauty of Gerona, the lovely *Senorita de Castello*. It was a great shock. He turned deathly pale and remained for a time staring at vacancy. Then with a profound sigh he tore up his half-finished sonnet "To Eve in Paradise," and began another self-dedicated, "To Adam in Hades." He keeps it in a sacred drawer, enshrined in lavender and pot-pourri.

"All this *rencontre* is very apropos," said the old priest. "Again the world is smaller than it seems. And we are getting on. Here is *Castellon de la Plana* already, with its fine fruit and flower gardens and picturesque peasants. Alas, we see less costume everywhere than of old. The taste of the world is not improving."

Very pleasantly passed the remainder of the journey, travelling through a country beautiful and fertile. Everywhere we saw traces of vineyards and cultivated lands. Here and there oxen were ploughing. Often we saw them thrashing out the rice. Many an old and picturesque well stood out now and then surrounded by trellis-work covered with vine-leaves. But the vines were not festooned after the picturesque manner of North Italy, where you walk beneath the trellis and pluck the grapes that hang down in rich clusters. Here the vines are trained on sticks, or grow like currant bushes, and as in Germany, lose their beauty.

A single field will produce at the same time fruit-trees, almond or olive, corn and grapes all mingling their beauty and perfume. We passed a multitude of orange and lemon groves with all their deep rich verdure. Nuts and olives, almonds and carobs abounded. Many a palm-tree added its Oriental grace to the landscape. The whole country seemed to revel in sunshine and blue skies. At *Saguntum*, that town of the ancients, the heights were crowned by walls, fortresses and castles, imperishable outlines grey with the lapse of centuries.

As it chanced we were all bound for Valencia. Our interesting bride and bridegroom were staying there one night and continuing their journey the next day. The priest was to spend a week there.

"I have a proposal to make," said de la Torre, as we neared the fair capital. "We telegraphed for our rooms and ordered dinner in our sitting-room. You three gentlemen must join us. It will only be adding three covers—an effort the chef will be equal to."

"Let me add my persuasions," added Madame de la Torre graciously and gracefully. "Remember we have been united a whole week and are quite an old married couple. You would give us great pleasure."

But this, strongly supported by de Nevada the priest, we felt bound to decline. It would have been cruel to intrude so long upon a tête-à-tête, which just now must form the delight of their existence.

"I must be obdurate," said the priest. "In the first place your delicate paradise food—which no doubt consists of crystallised orange-blossoms and butterflies' wings—would be wasted upon three hungry travellers dwelling without the enchanted gates. But let us compromise. We are all staying at the same hotel. We three unappropriated blessings will dine together, and after that we will come and take our coffee and Chartreuse with you, and remain exactly one hour by the clock: not a moment more."

So it was settled.

Soon after this all the church towers and steeples of Valencia came into view. Over a stretch of country, we saw the blue sea sparkling in the evening sunshine. In the air, above the rush of the train there was a sound of ringing bells.

"It must be a gala day," said Madame de la Torre, listening for a moment to the swelling clamour.

"It is for your arrival, madame," returned the priest gallantly. "They wish to do you honour."

Our fair Eve laughed. "Monsieur de Nevada," she cried, "you were never intended for a priest. It was a mistaken vocation. You ought to have married, and your wife would have been your idol."

Under the circumstances it was a somewhat unfortunate speech. The drama in de Nevada's life had taken place long before her birth. She evidently knew nothing of the story. But the priest had outlived his sorrow. He was of an age to sit loosely to the things of earth. A momentary shadow passed over his face, gone as soon as seen.

"Madame," he laughed in clear tones, "if I were forty years younger and Mademoiselle de Castello were not Madame de la Torre, she would almost induce me to forget my vows. As it is, all is well. I am saved the temptation. Valencia at last! Never did journey pass so quickly and pleasantly."

A well-appointed omnibus was in waiting. We filled it comfortably, and in a few minutes found ourselves at the Hotel España. The manager settled us in admirable quarters, and having some time to spare before dinner we went out to survey the fair city by evening light.

It proved more modern and bustling than we had imagined, and, at a first glance, disappointing. After the quiet streets of Tarragona it appeared to us the most crowded place we had ever been in; tram-cars ran to and fro; there was much noise and excitement. Half the crowd was composed of the student class. All seemed in an uproar, but it was only their natural tone and manner. The Valencians, especially the lower classes, are devoted to pleasure; the work of the day over, they live for enjoyment.

Involuntarily we were reminded of our old days in Paris in the

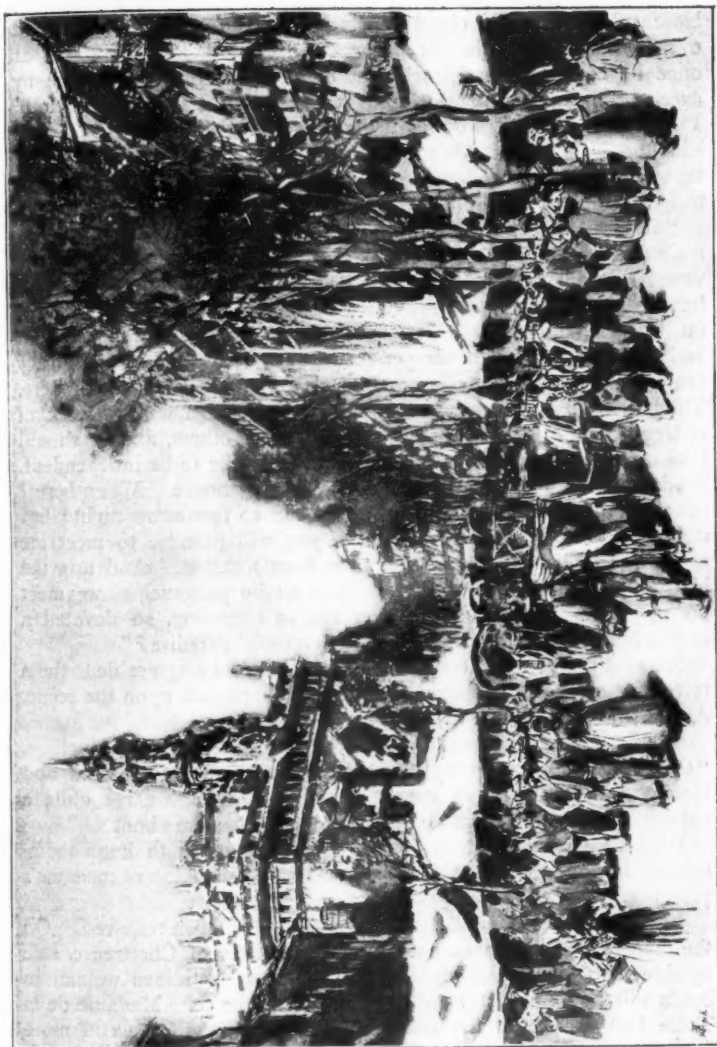
Quartier Latin. But there, excitement often meant revolutionary mischief. The Valencians are peace-loving. Their climate forces them to be gay and lively. Though passionate and hasty, like a violent tornado the rage soon passes. This evening, in spite of movement, a constant buzzing of voices, an excitement that seemed to fill the air, everything was in order. Gay laughter and chatter abounded, far more so than we had found in most of the Spanish towns. Until now the character of the Spaniard on ordinary occasions had seemed to us rather given to silence. In Valencia we came upon a new element, approaching the French or Italian.

The city has lost much of its ancient interest. As late as 1871, the wonderful old walls, massive and battlemented, were pulled down to find work for the poor. Twelve gates admitted to the interior: and what the walls were may be judged by the few gates that remain.

Within the city the air is close and relaxing, the skies are brilliant, the sun intensely hot, the streets narrow and densely packed with houses. This was designed to keep out the heat, but it also keeps out air and light. The houses in the side-streets are tall, massive and sombre-looking, and here some of the wonderful old palaces remain. The principal thoroughfares are commonplace. One has, as it were, to seek out its beauties. It is in its exceptional features that Valencia shines, and gradually steals into your affections. Not, however, as Tarragona the favoured. The pure air, the stately repose and dignified charm of that dream of the past is very opposed to the noisy unrest and crowded thoroughfares, the constant going to and fro, the confined atmosphere of this ancient city of the Cid.

Nevertheless it has its ecclesiastical attractions in the way of churches: some with interesting towers, though few with fine interiors. It is an archbishopric, therefore has a cathedral. It possesses a University, and most of the crowd we saw evidently thought that the bow cannot always be strung and Homer must sometimes nod. They fill the cafés and theatres, go mad with excitement in the bull-ring when the Sunday performance is given; and occasionally have a free fight amongst themselves, when some of them get locked up by way of warning to the many rather than as a punishment to the few. After such an outbreak, which is never very desperate, peace reigns for a time: peace that in truth is never seriously broken.

It was a relief that first evening to return to the comparative repose of the hotel. When the hour for dinner had struck, de Nevada in clerical garments came to our rooms and carried us off to his own sitting-room where he had had dinner served. We seemed fated to fall in with the clerical element in Spain, and as yet had certainly not regretted it. De Nevada was evidently well known and highly considered by the hotel people, who exerted their best efforts in his favour, which also fell to our portion. His conversation was a mixture of grave and gay. He had outlived his



MARKET PLACE, VALENCIA.

troubles, it may be, yet their influence remained. Every now and then a chance word or allusion seemed to vibrate some long-silent chord in heart or memory. A momentary shadow would pass over his face, as a small cloud passing over the sun for an instant overshadows the earth. It was over in a flash, and he would at once be his genial, jovial self: full of strong spirits toned down by excellent breeding and the thought of what was due to his cloth. Probably we saw more of his inner character than if we had dined with the de la Torres. We had him to ourselves, his entire conversation and attention, and amongst various topics, he gave us a great insight into many of the by-ways of the Spanish Church.

"It is a subject in which I am deeply interested," he said. "I am writing a book thereon, and devoting considerable space to the vexed argument of the Inquisition. It has never been properly handled, and I am not afraid to say that it was a serious blot if not on the characters, at least on the judgment of Ferdinand and Isabella. Souls were never yet gained nor religions established by cruelty and torture. It is partly for that reason that I am here. The Archbishop has a magnificent Library, and I want a week of reference amongst the books. We are as brothers, and I should take up my quarters in the palace, only that I like to be independent. To-day he is at Puzol, where he has a country house. When here I generally dine with him; was to have done so to-morrow night; but it is an informal engagement, and if you will promise to meet me again at the same hour, we will dine here together. And now the hour sounds for the de la Torres. Let us be punctual, as we must be so in leaving. Did you ever see so charming, so devoted a couple? Who would not dwell in such a fools' paradise?"

He sent our chief waiter to enquire if it would be agreeable to them to receive us, and in response Count Pedro appeared upon the scene. All our rooms adjoined.

"We are more than ready," he cried. "I am quite sure," laughing, "that you think we spend all our time sitting hand-in-hand and looking into each other's eyes. My dear Nevada, we are quite a sober couple, with a great deal of matter-of-fact sense about us."

"Which only proves how difficult it is for people to know themselves," laughed the priest. "But now for the sunshine of madame's presence."

In their sitting-room all banqueting signs had been removed. On the table steamed fragrant coffee, with a decanter of Chartreuse, side by side with cigars and cigarettes. The most fastidious woman in Spain will never object to smoking in her presence. Madame de la Torre had exchanged her becoming travelling-dress for a still more becoming evening costume. She looked dazzlingly beautiful, her pure white neck and arms decorated with jewels. As she rose and received us with a high-bred, bewitching grace, we thought we had seldom seen a fairer vision.

"Ah!" cried de Nevada, glancing at the table. "Your feast of orange blossoms and butterflies' wings was served by magic. In fact I am not aware that we are told that Adam and Eve in Paradise ate anything. Life was eternal and needed no renewing."

"You forget," laughed Madame de la Torre. "They ate fruit. Otherwise how could Eve have tempted Adam with an apple?"

"I have always held that that was a specially prepared temptation," returned the priest. "They had never eaten anything until then, and the danger lay in the new experience."

"Monsieur de Nevada you must go to school again," laughed Countess Pedro. "Or you are wilfully perverting facts to suit your purpose. I shall have to inform against you to the Archbishop. We are going to see him to-morrow morning. Are you not in his jurisdiction?"

"No, madame," replied the priest. "I hold no preferment in the province of Valencia. This Garden of Spain blooms not for my pleasure. Yet, how can I say so, for who enjoys it more when fate brings me here?"

"It is indeed the Garden of Spain," said de la Torre. "I often wish we were as favoured in the neighbourhood of Toledo—though we have little to complain of."

"Valencia is a land flowing with milk and honey," said the priest. "You must not hope for two Canaans so near each other."

"Tell me," said Madame de la Torre, as she poured out coffee with a graceful hand, "why this town is called Valencia del Cid. I thought the Cid had only to do with Burgos. I fear I am exposing my ignorance."

"It would be difficult to know what the Cid had not to do with and where he did not go," returned de Nevada. "He was a mighty man of valour, according to his lights: a great barbarian. In those days we might all have been the same. In my own mind, I have always likened him to the English Cromwell; and if Cromwell was in any way better than he, it is that he lived six centuries later. They were equally desperate, cruel, and unscrupulous. What a wonderful passage is that in the history of England! But the Cid had much to do with Valencia. He came here in 1094, and after a siege of twenty months took the town. It is remarkable how retribution follows a man, as surely as shadow follows the substance. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Never was truer proverb. What is it that Shakespeare says?" continued the priest, turning to us:

"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
The fateful shadows that hang by us still."

"I don't know that I quote correctly, and my English is barbarous," he laughed. "I never could master that fine language; perhaps for the reason that I never dwelt long enough in your country. Few and short have my visits been. It was in 1095 that

the Cid took Valencia. Ibn Jehaf the murderer was on the throne, having killed Yahya, whom Alonso VI. had placed there. This act brought the Cid down upon them. The first thing he did was to burn Jehaf alive on the great square that you will see to-morrow when you go to the Archbishop: an act worthy of the tyrant. He ruled here for five years. His will was law; it was a small reign of terror. Then he died, and his faithful wife Ximena endeavoured to hold the reins. Those were not times when a woman could rule easily, and in 1101 the Moors brought hers to an end and banished her from the province. It is said that when the Cid captured Valencia he took his wife and daughter to a height to show them the richness of the country; and promised his favourite daughter that if she pleased him in her marriage that fair prospect from the boundaries of the Saguntum Hills on the north to the confines of the sea on the east should be her dowry: a promise never fulfilled. Within three years the daughter died unwedded; a death so violent that it is said to have struck a death-blow to the Cid, and to have brought home to him many of his perfidious acts. Certain it is that he was never the same man afterwards. Another two years brought his own life to a close. But, madame, you are beguiling me into a history, and turning the old priest into a schoolmaster."

Our fair hostess laughed.

"You make me your debtor," she replied. "I shall take greater interest in what I see to-morrow, and look at everything through the eyes of the past. Has the Archbishop any relics of the Cid?"

"Not only of the Cid, but of many other historical persons and events," said de Nevada. "You must especially notice the library with its fine collection of books. I may be there at the moment, and if so will promote myself to the honour of Librarian in chief to Countess Pedro de la Torre."

"Beware!" laughed madame. "Countess Pedro has a thirst for knowledge. Your office will be no sinecure."

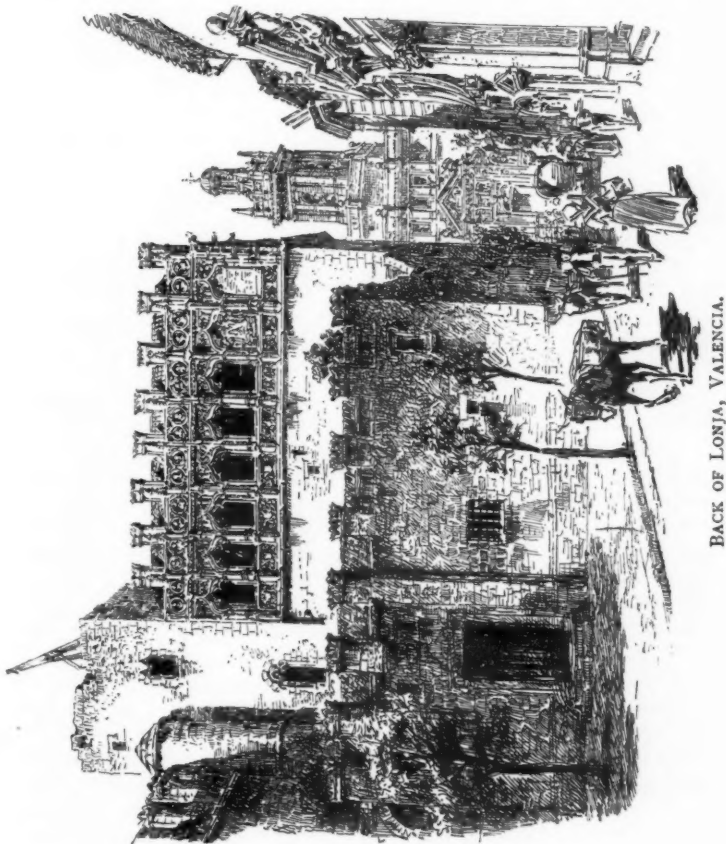
"My labour of love will at least equal madame's diligence, though the climate is hardly favourable to very hard work," smiled the priest. "Even Nature conspires to indolence in the people. The ground brings forth abundantly, and almost unaided. The Moors thought it an earthly paradise—as it is. I am not sure but they considered it the scene of the first paradise. Heaven, they said, was suspended immediately above; and a portion of heaven had fallen to earth and formed Valencia. To the sick and sorrowing it is a land of consolation. In its balmy airs—far more healing than those of Italy—the former recover strength; in the brilliance of its sunshine, the blueness of its skies, the splendour of its flowers and vegetation, the troubled mind finds peace and repose."

"Its system of irrigation—to descend to the commonplace," laughed Count Pedro—"is perfect. Does the council still sit in the Apostles' Gateway?"

"Indeed it does," replied the priest. "And far from being commonplace, the idea to me, surrounded by its halo of the past, is full of picturesque romance."

"What is that?" asked madame. "It is dangerous to make these remarks before an inquiring mind."

"The matter is simple," said de Nevada. "Valencia is the



most perfectly irrigated province in Spain, not excepting Granada. Especially is that the case in the surrounding neighbourhood. You must have noticed narrow channels running through the fields as you passed in the train. The system though perfect, presents infinite difficulties. Not one of the least is that all shall share alike in the fertilizing streams. In Granada a good deal is done by

signals, and occasionally in the night silence you may hear the silver bell sounding upon the air and carried from field to field : token that the dams are opened and the water flows. In Valencia they have nothing so poetical. The tribunal was instituted centuries ago by the Moors. It has been handed down from generation to generation and still continues. Being perfect, the system works well. Every Thursday morning seven judges sit in the great doorway of the cathedral, and hear all complaints relating to irrigation. These judges choose each other from the yeomen and irrigators of the neighbourhood. They pronounce sentence, and against that sentence there is no appeal. The judges are integrity itself. It is their motto, and it seems as impossible for them to go wrong as for a Freemason to betray the secrets of his craft. I think the system might with advantage be adopted by other tribunals."

"I should like to see and converse with these judges," said madame, "and decorate them with the order of the Golden Fleece. Surely they deserve it?"

"That order, I fear, is reserved for those of higher rank," replied the priest. "Yet I have often myself thought they should wear an order of Distinguished Merit: a sort of Cross of the Legion of Honour—after the French idea—open to all ranks and classes. But as you proceed on your journey to-morrow evening, you will not be here on a Thursday. The judges are indeed to be consoled with."

"I have slightly changed our plans," said Count Pedro, "and we leave the day after to-morrow by the early train. It will be less fatiguing for Isabel. We shall also see more of the country. I never tire of gazing upon the beauties of nature, and fortunately my wife is in sympathy with me. Seas, mountains, forests, vast territories, cultivated plains or sandy deserts, all alike fill me with a delight and rapture nothing else can equal. I hope to spend some of the first years of our married life in becoming intimate with the best points of many lands."

"You will find few more charming spots than Valencia," returned the priest. "Its rich plains never fail. No sooner has one harvest been gathered than another appears. Did you notice the peasants in the fields as we came along, sitting at work with their knees up to their ears? How picturesque they look walking down a road in their short white linen trousers and jackets and scarlet mantles, their coloured handkerchiefs wound round the head like a turban, and their blue scarfs round the waist. I have watched them many a time. You will see nothing of this in the town itself."

"I don't quite like the type of face," objected Count Pedro. "It is too African. The sun has grilled them to a colour that is almost mahogany. And they are superstitious and revengeful."

"But their imagination is lively, and keeps them in almost constant good humour," returned the priest. "How well they sing their



RENAISSANCE TOWER, VALENCIA.

fiera, how jovially they dance the *rondella*. It is quite a pleasure to look at this abandonment of happiness, this existence utterly free from care. Believe me, they have their virtues. And how pretty the women are ! Few women in Spain equal those of Valencia. They are singularly graceful and their walk is perfect. Notice a congregation of women in church. You will hardly find elsewhere an assemblage so conspicuous for beauty of face and grace of form."

Countess Pedro shook her head. "Oh !" she cried, raising her clasped hands. "I shall have more and more to tell of you to the Archbishop. Monsieur de Nevada, you are not supposed to know that female beauty exists, and here you are describing it with an eloquence which comes from the heart."

"With humble deference to your opinion, madame, I disagree with you," laughed the priest. "All things beautiful are to be appreciated ; above everything else a beautiful woman, the noblest work of God. We worship the stars in the heavens, though we can never attain to them. Do you imagine that I could be in this room and remain insensible to such charms as few women possess ?"

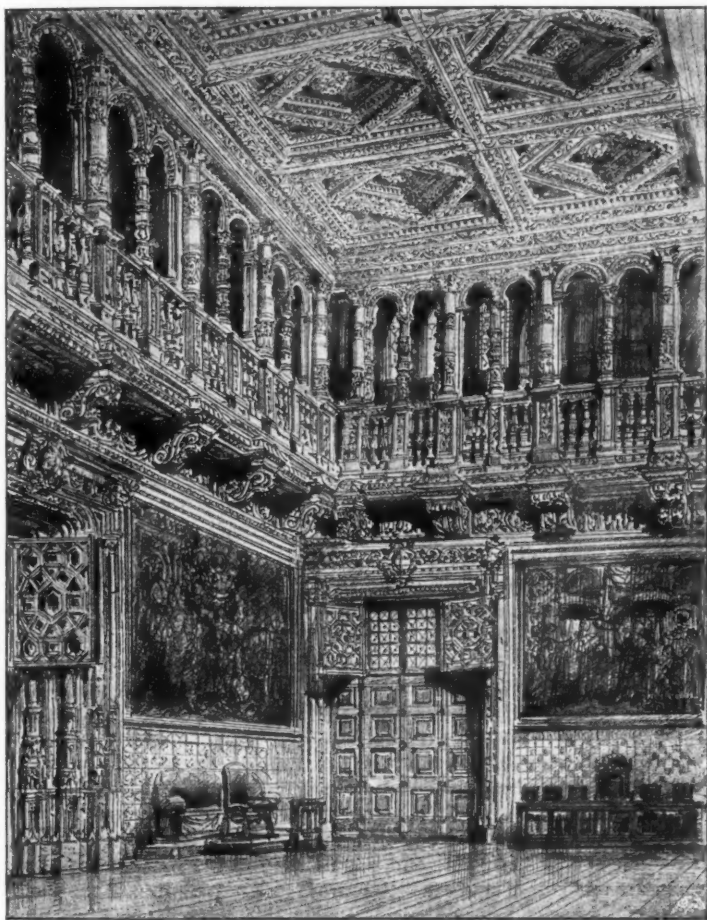
Our fair hostess blushed with pleasure. No woman is insensible to a compliment of which she can easily judge the sincerity. Every woman also likes to be praised before the husband to whom she is devoted. The age of de Nevada permitted him to be candid in expressing his admiration, whilst the in some sort family connection that would take place at the marriage referred to, had paved the way to an immediate and friendly intimacy.

In spite of the priest's emphatic determination to leave punctually, the hour had long struck when we reluctantly took our leave. Both de la Torre and his fair wife were charming, refined and intellectual, and the moments had passed all too quickly.

Next morning the crowded streets had thinned. Most of the people had disappeared, reserving themselves for the evening. Yet there was a constant, quiet activity going on, which gave the city a lively and prosperous air. It was market-day ; the most picturesque market we had yet seen in Spain ; thronged with buyers and sellers, piled up with all the fruits and vegetables of the South. Figs, grapes, and pomegranates abounded at very small prices. The market-place was full of colouring, in part due to the bright handkerchiefs and scarves worn by men and women.

All was as nothing compared with the splendour and perfume of the covered flower-market. For a few halfpence one carried away sufficient to decorate a palace. For ninepence one woman offered us a bouquet quite two yards round. We had never seen anything like it and wondered if it was meant to grace some foreign Lord Mayor's banquet. This sum was asked with some hesitation, seeing that we were strangers : she was prepared to take half the amount. The roses were far lovelier than those that grow in the gardens of

Italy and find their way across the Channel. We gave twopence for a handful of tuberoses and pinks, and the woman was so charmed at the liberal payment, that she presented us with a great bunch of sweet verbenas. We have some of the leaves now; and the scent—



AUDIENCIA.

rare above all other scents—hangs round them still. Each morning we renewed our purchase. The flowers were always there. For them it was market-day all the year round.

The market-place was a charming three-cornered square. On one

side was a Renaissance church that for its style was really picturesque, and formed an admirable background to the women and stalls. The interior, all gilt and glitter, set one's teeth on edge; but that did not alter the outward effect.

Opposite was a far lovelier building; the Lonja de Seda, or ancient silk hall; of exquisitely beautiful and refined fifteenth-century Gothic.

The immense rooms were ornamented with fluted columns without capitals, that spread out like the leaves of a palm-tree and lost themselves in the roof. Behind it was an old garden, with wonderful architectural surroundings. A long stone staircase ended in a Gothic doorway of graceful outlines and deep rich mouldings. Windows filled with half-ruined tracery looked on to the garden with its trees and flowers. The upper part was an open Gothic arcade with rich ornamentations and medallions, and a massive square tower with a round Norman turret.

This dream building was vanishing under the hands of the restorer. The court was filled with workmen; the exquisite tone of age, the rounded, crumbling outlines were beginning to disappear. We were just in time to see it at its best.

From this we made our way to the cathedral of which little need be said. After the architectural dreams of Catalonia, it was terribly unsatisfactory. The interior gave out no sense of grandeur, repose or devotion. On Sunday, during service it gained a certain solemn impressiveness from the kneeling crowd, but that was all. Begun in the thirteenth century, and originally Gothic, few traces of the first building remain. Certain portions of the exterior are beautiful and striking; especially the magnificent north doorway; the Apostles' doorway; deep and richly ornamented, though many of its statues have disappeared. It is here that the Tribunal of the Waters sits in judgment, to which we have heard de Nevada allude.

Near the cathedral was the Audiencia or Court of Justice, one of the most perfect buildings in Europe. Though the ground-floor has been divided into public offices, the elaborately carved and gilt ceilings remain, decorated with splendid honeycomb pendentives of the Moorish School. The first floor is given up to the matchless Salon de Cortes, where justice is administered. The walls were covered with curious frescoes of the sixteenth century, chiefly portraits of the members of the Cortes assembled in session. The rich carving of the room is in native pine and was finished in the sixteenth century, when art was still at its best. A narrow gallery runs round the room supported by slender columns. Below this are coats-of-arms and busts of the kings of Aragon, with appropriate historical incidents. The ceiling is also elaborately carved in lozenges encased in square panels. Not the smallest fragment of the room has been left undecorated, and its refined and subdued tone is lovely in the extreme. Here we found the sword and banner of Jaime el Conquistador, which the Valencians place amongst their chief treasures.

The churches are numerous, but not specially interesting. San Salvador possesses a rude expressive sculpture of the thirteenth century, a curious image, supposed to have been carved by Nicodemus, and said to have miraculously found its solitary way from Syria across the seas.

Not far from this is the Church, given to the Templars by James I. in 1238, when already a building of some antiquity. Here was the remarkable tower of Alibufat, on which the Cross was first displayed. But like the people of Zaragoza, who pulled down their leaning tower, so the Valencians demolished their Tower of Alibufat to widen a street. We have seen that even their ancient walls were not spared. They have no respect for antiquity; no love for the past. A modern spirit possesses them; a love of pleasure and comfort; a desire to get money for the sake of indulgence. Gay, lively, full of excitement and impulse, everything yields to the passing moment.

Next we come to the once vast and splendid Convent of San Domingo, in the days of its glory one of the richest and most powerful convents in Spain. It is now shorn of all its ecclesiastical element. Outlines alone remain: chapter-house and cloisters of late Gothic, still beautiful and refined. In a small chapel supported by four slender pillars San Vincente Ferrer took upon him the vows of a monk.

Of the religious ceremonies the most imposing is the Miserere which takes place every Friday in the church of the Colegio del Patriarca. High Mass is first given at 9 o'clock. The music both at this and the Miserere is magnificent. Many of the rank and fashion of Valencia are constant in their attendance. Ladies assemble in a great crowd, each wearing a black mantilla. As they kneel in penitential attitude the scene is full of devotional grace and charm.

The space above the high altar is covered with a purple pall, which looks black and funereal. Chanting commences: slow and solemn and in the minor key.

Suddenly, in the midst of the sad cadences, the picture above the altar descends by machinery, and in its place is seen a lilac veil. There is a slight movement, a half-raising of the head, amidst the congregation; an attitude of expectation. The mournful but exquisite music does not cease. It is soft and subdued, appealing to the senses. Presently the veil is withdrawn, and gives place to a grey veil. This in turn passes away, and a black veil appears, representing the veil of the Temple. It is torn asunder, and an image of the Saviour on the Cross is disclosed.

The upturned heads gaze for a moment; on many a countenance appears the emotion actually felt. Imagination is stirred by the dramatic representation. A murmur escapes the kneeling multitude; the music swells to a louder strain, the voices gain a deeper pathos. Then voices and organ gradually die away to a whisper and cease.

Silence reigns. For a moment there is no sound or stir. Then

all is over; the Miserere is at an end. Quietly the fair penitents rise from their knees, and stream out into the streets, which gain an additional charm as they pass onwards with their perfect forms and graceful walk.

In spite of the somewhat claptrap element, the Miserere is impressive from the beautiful and refined music, the kneeling crowd, the deep obscurity that gives it a mystery. It is even worth a day or two's delay in this fair City of Flowers and other delights.

For in our own mind we always associate Valencia with the perfume of flowers. Roses for ever bloom, and like silver in the days of Solomon, are accounted as little worth. To us, if they were plentiful as to the Greeks of old, they would only seem the lovelier.

Some of the streets are very picturesque, with long narrowing vistas of houses and balconies, casements and quaint outlines, all in the strong light and shadow of sunshine, with perhaps a church tower and spire rising above all at the end, sharply outlined against the intensely brilliant blue of the sky.

Making way, we reach the gates of the city, which are still its glory, though so few remain of the twelve that once admitted to the interior. Some still retain their towers and machicolations. Outside these, runs the famous river with its ancient bridges. Crossing one of them, and proceeding a distance of three miles down a straight, not very interesting road, you reach the famous port of Valencia: one of the finest ports in Spain, one of the largest harbours. After the close atmosphere of the town, the scene is agreeable and exhilarating.

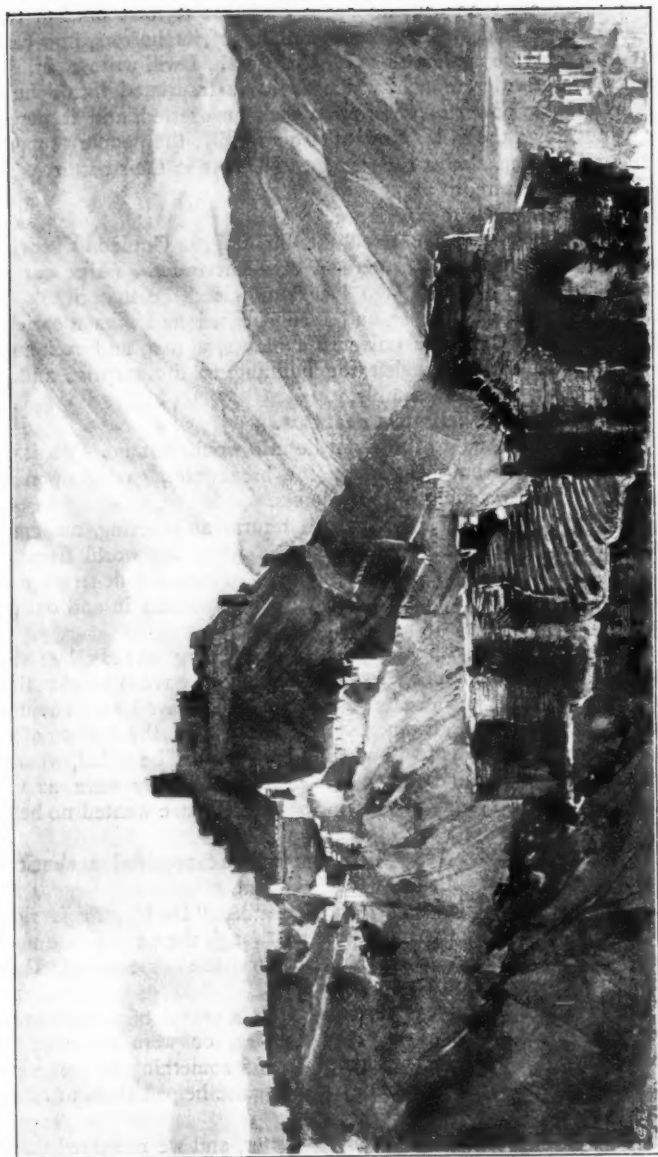
Our first visit was on a Sunday; all labour was suspended. Vessels of all countries were flying their flags. From the end of the long breakwater we breathed freely. Before us stretched the wide shimmering sea blue as the sky above. A very few white-sailed boats were gliding about—only in summer are they found in large numbers. On such a day as this, hot, glowing and glorious to us of the North, the soft-climed Valencians would not venture upon the water. An occasional fishing-boat strayed in or out, but everything else was at peace. The whole place was deserted. There was a strange calm and quiet upon everything; almost an English "Sabbath stillness" in the air.

We wondered, but soon discovered the cause. This might have dawned upon us had we called to mind yesterday's experience.

We were walking through the market-place with de Nevada the priest, when a large placard caught our eye, announcing a bull-fight for the next day Sunday: the last of the season.

"I have never seen one," said H. C. "We must go to it."

"Surely you would not visit the barbarous exhibition?" said de Nevada. "In this matter I have nothing of the Spaniard in me. I hold bull-fights to be a curse of the country; training up children to cruelty, and laying the foundation to a host of evils."



SAGUNTUM.

But his words had no weight with Telemachus.

"I think every one should see a bull-fight at least once in their lives," he remarked. "If I know nothing of its horrors, how can I join in a crusade against them? Once seen, I will write a brilliant poem on the entertainment which shall be translated into Spanish. All my graphic power of description shall be exerted, and it may go far to put down the evil. I might also appeal to the people's superstition, which seems almost the strongest element in their nature. You will come?" turning to us.

But we had had our experience.

Years before, we had entered the bull-ring at Granada with eight naval officers whose nerves were in excellent order. (Alas, our old friend and host, Admiral Jago, has since joined the majority.) But when the play was half over, and men shouted and women shrieked and waved, and there was universal applause, uproar, and excitement—sick of the horrors, we left the building, to the surprise and no doubt contempt of the assembly.

So H. C.'s appeal fell upon deaf ears.

And when it came to the point he also would not go. So it fell out that we were both sitting on the breakwater, gazing upon the shimmering sea, revelling in the stillness.

The scene changed. We had to return, and seeing an empty tramcar, took it and found ourselves enjoying the world from our solitary elevation—a short-lived pleasure. From a side-street there suddenly poured forth a crowd of men, who swarmed in and out and up the sides: and the stillness was over.

They were mad with excitement: and being already late were feverishly anxious to make way. One might have thought them intoxicated, but it was excitement only. They raved and shouted; their eyes flashed and glistened; they anticipated the horrors of the bull-ring; speculated as to how many bulls would be killed, whether the toreador would escape. For the moment they were as wild animals, and de Nevada's protest in the market-place wanted no better illustration.

H. C. shuddered. His poetical mind had received a shock in coming into contact with this coarse element.

"I am glad I decided not to go," he said. "De Nevada is right. Bull-fighting should be put down, even though the people rose up in revolt. It needs a Crusade as much as ever the cause for which the Templars went eastward."

The Plaza de Toros was thronged with a crowd of men, women, and children, who could not pay the fee, or were too late for admission. If they could not enter, it was something to look upon the outer walls, whilst the thunders of applause helped them to realise the scene.

The tramcar waited some twenty minutes, and we remained studying the crowd of eager faces that surged to and fro. From the bull-

ring—one of the largest and finest in Spain—arose that constant roar and tempest of shouting.

We were almost prisoners, wondering how we should escape; and when a city tramcar came up and stood side by side with ours, we made the exchange. This slowly moved through the crowd, and turned into a quieter thoroughfare, and the applause followed us far down the road.

The car travelled slowly round the town, through the Cathedral Square, in and out of ancient gateways. Street after street was comparatively deserted, but wore its Sunday dress. Flowers abounded. We were on a level with first-floor windows, and from many an open casement came a glimpse of domestic interiors: the scent of roses; fair ladies dressed in "shimmer of silk and gleam of pearls;" ripples of laughter and conversation; occasional streams of melody from a fair performer. Absorbed, we did not observe the car gradually getting round to its starting-point until we once more found ourselves in the centre of the crowd outside the bull-ring.

They had not moved an inch. The spectacle was over at that moment; the great doors were thrown open, and a cortège passed out: cart after cart with dead horses and bulls: the latter decorated as for a prize show. A deafening roar went up from the people. Finally came the vehicle with the toreadors and matadors, dressed in all their fine colours: flushed with their performance, but calmly taking the hurrahs. The very horses seemed maddened as they tore out of sight. Then the crowd began to disperse. Strolling out after dinner, we found ourselves in front of the bull-ring. In the darkness it looked a second Roman Coliseum. The square was deserted. The crowds had gone home to live it all over again in their dreams. Silence reigned. But winter would pass, and the time come round for fresh spectacles and horrors.

And so it goes on.

That night our own dreams were fitful and broken. We had watched the sunset from the tramcar, full of splendour and colouring. As the sun went down, a chilliness had risen upon the air, and suddenly we shivered. Then it passed away, but for us there was no rest on retiring. Fever came on, and in semi-delirium we imagined that we were taking part in a bull-fight; warring with infuriated animals. There was no rest and no escape. Deafening shouts rang in our ears, but still the combat went on. It seemed to have gone on for years, and must go on for ever.

The agony was terrible. Molten lead coursed through our veins. We tried to rise, but chains bound us down. The night passed. In the early morning the fever abated, and presently we awoke from a short, unrefreshing slumber: rose as one who has gone through a long illness. When H. C. appeared and said it was time for the flower-market and the Lonja, he went out alone.

Our special waiter, who felt he could not be sufficiently attentive

to friends of de Nevada and the de la Torres, brought us strong tea; and on hearing an account of our night, suddenly departed and reappeared with a white powder, procured at the chemist's.

"You have had a touch of the fever, señor, caught last night at sundown," he remarked. "It is taken in a moment, but seldom shaken off so quickly. This powder will go far to put you right."

We took it in faith, and found it chiefly quinine. The effect was excellent. Though still weak, we were capable of an effort, and when H. C. returned with hands full of roses, carnations, orange-blossoms and sweet verberna—for which he had extravagantly paid threepence—we were able to carry out our pre-arranged programme and start for Saguntum.

A short railway journey landed us amidst the ruins of this ancient city, where we were in the very atmosphere not only of Rome, but of days and people long before.

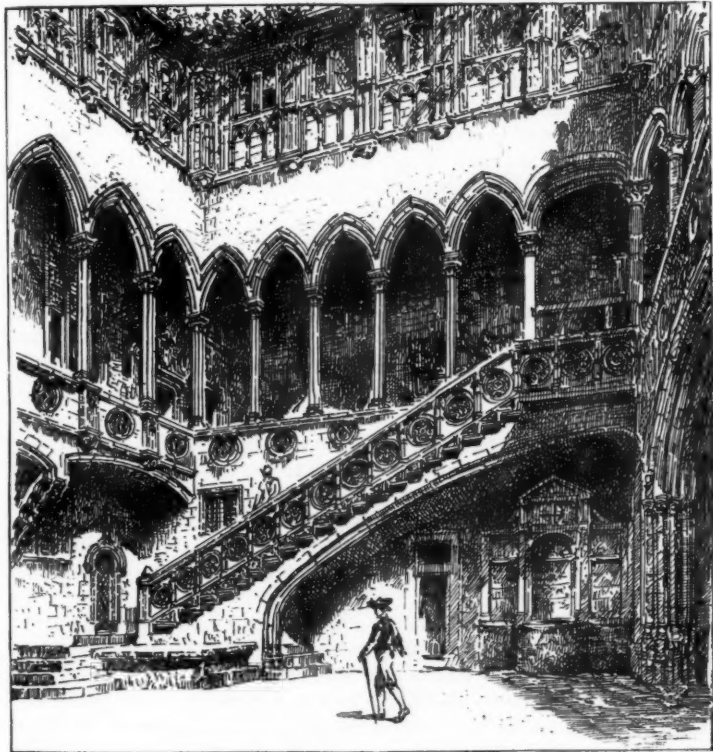
The small and primitive town at the foot of the height was full of quaint outlines. Large circular doorways led to wonderful interiors; immense living-rooms in semi-obscurity; rich dark walls whose colour and tone were due to smoke and age. Here women were working and spinning and sometimes bending over a huge fire, deep in the mysteries of cooking. Beyond these dark rooms, one caught sight of open courts or gardens, where orange and other trees flourished. Some of the women were busy making cheese, which here is quite an article of commerce, and goes to many parts of the country. We had the place to ourselves. The women stopped their cheese-making and spinning to assemble in groups of twos and threes and stare after us. Human nature is curious and inquisitive all the world over.

But the charm and attraction of the place are the ruins that crown the heights; walls and towers now crumbling and desolate, proving the strength and power of Saguntum in ages gone by. It was founded nearly 1400 years before the Christian Era by the Greeks of Zante, when the Phœnicians were still monarchs of the land. Why they permitted the Greeks to erect this stronghold does not appear. When a wealthy frontier town, allied to Rome, it was attacked by Hannibal. The defence was brave, determined and prolonged; but Rome would not come to the rescue, and the town perished amidst frightful horrors. This chiefly led to the Second Punic War, by which Saguntum was revenged and Hannibal and his armies were routed out of Spain: reverses they never recovered. In time it was rebuilt by the Romans, and in the course of centuries fell under the dominion of the Goths and the Moors.

Saguntum—Murviedro, as it is often called—is now a magnificent ruin. The climb to the castle is long, steep and rugged. On reaching the gates we found them closed. There was no guardian to admit us; the ruins were uninhabited. After our feverish night we felt that a return to the town for the keys, and a second long climb would be too much of a penance. Yet the interior must be seen.

Fortune favoured us. We found a man near the gates cutting away the rank grass and the weeds: a strange uncanny-looking creature; terribly hump-backed; with a pale long-drawn face from which a couple of dark eyes looked out upon you with a strange inward fire that seemed to be consuming him. He was almost a skeleton, as though he and starvation were close companions.

We made known our embarrassment, offering a substantial bribe if



COURTYARD OF AUDIENCIA, BARCELONA.

he would go down and bring up the keys. The man's eyes sparkled. Without the least hesitation he put down his great shears, and put on the coat which he had placed under the walls.

"If the keys are to be had, señor, by mortal power, I will not return without them," he said. His voice was shrill with the sharpness of habitual suffering.

"Go," we replied, "and success attend you. We await you here."

We sat down between the great gates and the ruins of the Roman theatre, and watched our messenger as his long thin legs rapidly got over the ground. Then he disappeared behind the houses.

We waited and wondered. Presently he reappeared followed by an old woman dangling great keys. His eloquence had prevailed. Perhaps he had promised to share the bribe, or had a hope that we might double it. Panting and breathless with haste, they reached us.

"Ah, señor," said the old woman, "this is unheard-of. No one enters without permission from the commandant. If he knew, it would be as much as my place is worth—not that it is worth much. But he is away to-day; gone to Valencia to the marriage of a friend. So I have some excuse; and he will never know. But I will admit you. The times I have opened these gates! I am sixty-five, señor, and have been up and down here, through summer and winter, through storm and tempest ever since I was fifteen. It is pretty near the end now."

Inserting the great key into the rough and rusty old lock, the rude doors opened and admitted us.

We found the fortress distinctly Moorish, and very interesting. The old woman was well up in her work, and knew the history of every portion. Amidst the ruins of the castle were some Moorish cisterns, which she declared were bottomless, and where blind fish for ever swam. Below what was once the governor's garden, she led us to gloomy dungeons where prisoners, heavily chained, were confined for life. She described many horrors that had taken place in the past. Everything testified to the strength of Saguntum of old.

From the walls the views were magnificent. Stretching across the wide plain, one caught faint traces of Valencia and the shimmering sea. At our feet was the little town and beyond it the hills rose in gentle outlines.

As we looked we observed a procession set forth upon the white road. Harsh, discordant music from brass instruments rose upon the air. Then we saw that it was a funeral. The coffin was being slowly borne on men's shoulders to the cemetery. The latter was near the town, enclosed in high walls above which appeared the dark pointed tops of the melancholy cypress. A group of mourners followed the coffin; women bowed and weeping, men subdued: quite a long stream of them. Near us stood our curious messenger.

"Who is it?" we asked.

"A sad story, señor. A youth of seventeen, who caught the fever and died. A week ago he was as well as you or I: full of energy and enterprise: talking of what he wanted and what he would do in the future. His ambition was to emigrate, and for long he had been trying to get his parents' consent. But he was their only child, and they were loath to part with him. Ah! he has taken

a longer journey now; emigrated to a more distant country. And there will be no coming back to Murviedro."

"And his parents?"

"Poor things! They are heartbroken. There goes his mother, supported by two women friends. One can almost hear her weeping. Oh that horrible music! It goes through my spine as if it would tear it asunder. When I am buried I hope they will have no music. I think I should turn in my coffin. Is it not a splendid view, señor? This fortress may well be called the key of Valencia. The key of the province, you understand, not of the mere town. We command the best of the country. You should see it in summer, when every tree is in full leaf and every flower in bloom, and the branches droop with the weight of their fruit. A land of abundance, is it not, Miguella?" turning to the old woman, who stood looking at the sad cortège with weeping eyes.

"Ay, Juan, it is so," she returned with tearful voice. "Abundance of everything. But fate is cruel, and strong youth must die, and old people like you and I who half starve for all the abundance, must still cumber the earth."

"Speak for yourself, Madre Miguella," returned the man sharply. "Whatever you may be, I am not yet old, and I don't see that I take the place of a better man. I shall be forty-one next New Year's Day. A hard life I have of it; few pleasures and little food. I am not formed as other men; no woman looking at me would take me for her husband. For all that, I am not tired of life, and have no desire to be in the place of that poor lad. It will come soon enough, Madre Miguella, without wishing oneself there before the time."

"Santa Maria! what a clucking about nothing!" retorted Miguella. "If I called you an old man it was only a form of speech. I had in my mind's eye the strong and lusty youth who has gone to his burial. Compared with him I should call you old and of little worth. After all, I was only thinking of the uncertainty of human life. You won't deny that, friend Juan."

"I suppose I can't," replied the contrite hunchback. "Poor lad! I could almost have found it in my heart to die for him. He was always so good to me; never mocked at me; gave me many a centimo from his little hoard; and often shared his dinner if I met him on the road. I have lost a friend in him."

Miguella was shedding tears afresh at the recital of the lad's virtues.

"Poor boy!" she cried. "But he is better off. He hadn't time to grow hard and wicked. The angels make no mistake when they come for such as him. I wish his poor mother could see it in that light."

"Give her time, give her time," returned the hunchback. "If you lost your leg, you would not all at once grow reconciled to a wooden one. Nature doesn't work in spasms, Miguella. By-and-bye, the

poor mother will come to see mercy in the blow, but she can't do that whilst the sound of her boy's voice rings in her ears, and she still feels the clasp of his arms round her neck. She wouldn't be a mother if she did."

Time was on the wing. The sun was declining, the shadows were lengthening when we turned from the ruins and once more stood outside the walls. Miguella locked the doors with a firm hand and possessed herself of the keys. We took care that the bribe should not have to be halved. It was a gala day for them, poor creatures. Juan's face lighted up with infinite contentment.

"Lucky thing for me that I came up weeding, señor," he cried. "For a whole week to come I need feel no hunger, and may give my poor weak body a little repose."

"But life is not quite such hard lines with you, Miguella?" we remarked.

"Not quite, señor, though hard enough. Yet I have many mercies. I earn a little money by making cheeses; and in summer, when visitors now and then come to Murviedro, I take a trifle and put by a peseta for a rainy day. Heaven be praised I have never been in actual want; and Juan knows that he has never in vain asked me to lend him a centimo. Though I find his accounts very long reckonings," she quaintly added with a smile.

"Miguella, you have been as good as a mother to me," returned the grateful Juan. "I never knew any other mother. I have ever been a waif on the earth, without kith and kin either to bless or ban."

We all went down the rugged steep together. At the bottom, Juan bade us farewell and turned to the left, towards his humble cottage. Miguella escorted us up the quaint and quiet street. We passed through a picturesque gateway, and just beyond this was her small house.

"Señor, if you would allow me to make you some coffee to refresh you for your journey, I should be happy," she said. "I am famous, señor, both for my cheese and my coffee."

To refuse would give her pain; the train was not due for an hour and a half; a cup of Miguella's coffee was not to be despised. She turned with a glad smile, opened her door, and invited us to enter.

It was a surprise to find her cottage the perfection of order, for the Spaniards are not famous for the virtue. She placed chairs, and bustled about her preparations. In a few moments a peat fire with sticks was blazing on the hearth, water was put on to boil, and a brown earthenware coffee-pot was placed on the embers to warm. In her own domain, Miguella turned into a handy, comely old woman, who moved about without noise, and must have been a good helpmeet to the husband she had lost a quarter of a century ago. Whilst the water was boiling, she took us into an inner room, and showed us her arrangements for making cheese. It was an interesting sight, and

the old woman went up still further in our estimation. Everything was spotlessly pure and clean. A grey cat followed her about like a dog, and seemed devoted to her.



INTERIOR, BARCELONA CATHEDRAL.

"She is getting old like me," said poor Miguella, "but she is a faithful animal. Never by any chance does she put her nose into a pan of milk. I might leave it all open; nothing would be touched. It is only ewes' milk, señor. Would you like some in your coffee?"

But we thought black coffee would be more stimulating.

She placed it on the table. It was hot and fragrant. Miguella had not overpraised the cunning of her hand. With a slight diffidence meant for an apology, she took out one of her fresh little cheeses, and with home-made bread, placed it on the table. The coffee she served in white cups of coarse porcelain, which we admired, and she brought forward plates of the same material.

So Miguella, in her largeness of heart gave us hospitality, and our simple collation was so perfect that a king need have wished for nothing better. She had put on a white apron to serve us more becomingly, she said, and from her chimney-corner, where she added fuel to her fire, surveyed the appreciation of her labours with a glow of pride and pleasure. To us, the incident—not an every-day one—had borne a certain interest and charm. We had gone back for a moment to primitive days, “when Adam delved and Eve span.” The best of Miguella’s nature had come out simply because we had been a little kind to her: and we made the wise reflection that too often the greatest enemy to mankind is man.

Our last glimpse of Miguella was of a comely old woman standing in her doorway watching our departure. The glow of the setting sun was upon her face, which moreover was softened and refined by her abundant grey hair. She looked pleased and happy. No doubt she would return to her chimney-corner and her cheese-making, and ponder over the day’s small adventure. Juan would be no loser. Many a centimo would find its way from her pocket to his, and he would think her more motherly than ever.

On our way to the station we saw the sad funeral procession approaching. Most had dispersed, but some six or eight women were returning with the poor mother, who still looked bowed down and heart-broken. As Juan had wisely said, time would soften the blow, but for the present no silver lining was visible in the heavy cloud overshadowing the life.

We watched them disappear through one of the large round doorways into the home that was now desolate. Then we went on, and presently the train came up, and Saguntum passed out of our lives, though not out of memory. Miguella and Juan, the ancient ruins and outlines crowning the heights, the quaint streets with their picturesque interiors, the sad procession winding slowly down the long white road, nothing could ever be forgotten.

Some days after this we were walking through the streets of Barcelona. We had said good-bye to Valencia and our present sojourn in Spain was drawing to a close. With sorrow and regret we remembered the motto of the wise king *THIS ALSO SHALL PASS AWAY*. We have often quoted it before, but it is ever present with us and we quote it again. We had gone through many experiences, made many acquaintances who had become friends. In imagination

a small crowd of companions surrounded us, every one of whom had a special niche in our heart and memory. We had wandered intuitively into the neighbourhood of the cathedral. As we stood in the courtyard of the Audiencia, admiring for the fiftieth time its pointed arches and clustered columns and fine old staircase, two people entered, breaking upon our solitude. Their faces were radiant with happiness. At the first moment we hardly recognised them; the next we saw that it was Loretta and Lorenzo.

"Still in Barcelona!" we cried. "How is this, Loretta?"

"Señor, we have prolonged our stay," replied Loretta. "There was no special reason why we should not do so. Work is provided for, and the donkeys are in good keeping. We shall never again have such a holiday. It comes only once in our lives."

"It is quite unnecessary to remark that you are happy, both of you."

"Señor, I ask what I have done that heaven should have bestowed such favour upon me," returned Loretta, her face glowing. "I feel as if I could take the whole creation under my wing and love it for the sake of the love that is mine. I tell myself that I have not half cared for my dumb animals, though harsh word to them never passed my lips."

"Loretta, we have found your clock," we said, passing from the sublime to the commonplace. "Come both of you and see it."

It was in the adjoining Calle de Fernando, not many yards from where we stood. We were just in time. The clockmaker was about to pack it up and despatch it. Its design might have been made to our order. A clock of white alabaster, pure as the heart of Loretta. Cupid with bow and arrows slung behind him struck the hours on a silver bell. The hour-glass was missing, it is true, but the sands of Loretta and Lorenzo were none the less golden. So the clock instead of being forwarded to Esplugas, was sent to their address in Barcelona.

"My happiness is now complete," cried Loretta. "Yet one thing is still wanting. I would that you, señor, should come as speedily as possible and ride Caro to Poblet, and that Lorenzo and I should wait upon you. Ah, señor, do not delay."

But many months have gone by since those words were uttered, and the wish is still unfulfilled.

"This is one of the most romantic episodes I ever heard of," cried H. C. as Loretta and Lorenzo walked away arm in arm in their great happiness, whilst we turned to contemplate once more the magic interior of the cathedral.

"It is indeed," we answered. "And proves beyond all doubt that in a few of her people, no less than in her monuments and outlines, lurks the true, undying, all-powerful ROMANCE OF SPAIN."



A PARENTHESIS.

"STAND back!"

And the huddled crowd on the narrow platform—whiling away a tedious wait in the divers ways known to the British excursionist—swayed like a field of wheat and tottered. Then there was a little panic among them, a crashing and falling on one another, and a stifled cry that the roar of the northern express muffled.

And when the train had whirled through, and the thunder and vibration were past, the two hundred odd souls, waiting for its tardy successor, realised that something had happened.

Three in the rear of the throng had had the life well-nigh pressed out of them—one, a woman, was badly crushed between the wall and a trolley laden with milk-cans.

"Fetch the doctor," urged one and another.

Suddenly someone made his way through the crowd. Partly by virtue of his height, partly of the load he carried, a pathway was cut for him on the instant, and he went on with his burden to the station gate. Here he halted.

"Foster!" he called.

A lathe of a man threaded his way deftly to his side, and to him he said:

"Tell them to get a bed ready at the *King's Arms* at once."

"It only wants five minutes to the London train, Mr. Frere," suggested the station-master at his elbow. "And we could get Dr. Gill here in an hour."

Frere paused a half-second. "But in what condition?" he asked.

"Well, not at his best," allowed the station-master.

"I shall go on to-morrow. Keep back my bags, will you, Buxton? Foster can bring them across to the inn presently. I shan't drive back to Dun Moor to-night." And he preceded his portmanteaus thither with the woman he carried, as composedly as if it had been his original intention to dine and sleep in a wayside inn three hundred miles from town.

Men who have travelled their thousands over half the countries of

the globe, have a knack of shaking down easily, and at short notice. He had ; and generally came off fairly well ; at any rate, in his native county, where he was a popular and conspicuous figure, for whom the rustics cherished a vague awe as for a person who had dived deep into strange sciences ; weathered strange hardships ; and contributed strange books to the erudite literature of their land.

"Well, sir," remarked the landlady, when the injured woman was safely established under the funeral trappings and pre-historic monsters of the most wonderful old bed in the Peak. "Well, sir, I always do say as it was a pity you didn't stay amongst us to do what you seem cut out for, instead of facing wild beasts and wild men in outlandish foreign parts with but a fair-cooked meal once in six months, and never a night's rest to speak of !"

Worsley Frere laughed, adjusting the final bandage on the arm of his unconscious patient.

"Who knows but that I may come to it yet, Mrs. Greenfield ? Nothing like having half a dozen trades to fall back on. I shall look in again before I turn in. Give the patient a little brandy now and then. We must have Gill here the first thing in the morning."

For Gill, a message was accordingly dispatched next day ; and Frere, scribbling telegrams in the bar-parlour, went out to meet him.

"One of the pleasure-seekers come to grief, eh ?" said the little surgeon jovially. "I heard something of it last night ; but when they told me you were here, I knew better than to come. Who is she ?"

"No one knows. Not an excursionist. Buxton tells me she had just booked for town when the accident happened. Come and see her. She slept fairly, and is conscious now. A bad case though."

She was propped up against the huge pillows when they entered together, her cloud of hair lost in the dark background of grotesque carved figures.

The examination and consultation occupied but a few minutes, during which the object of it kept her large eyes on the two faces with a curious speculative calm. That the men differed in their opinion was evident to her, though they spoke scarcely half a dozen words, and she dealt with the dilemma in the curious frank manner that had already puzzled the landlady.

It was when Frere came back into the room after a brief adjournment. A bar of sunlight fell across the bed, and streaked the unbandaged hand that lay before her on the sheet. She greeted him at once.

"You are the doctor who attended me last night ? I wish for no second opinion."

Her manner, imperious yet simple, impressed him as a little inconsonant with the severely plain garb he had seen her in the night before ; and he said, almost in the tone with which he might humour a child : "Dr. Gill is a clever man ; moreover——"

"I don't like him !"

"Moreover, I am not, as he is, a doctor by profession. I have walked the hospital, but——"

"But you don't mean to bother yourself with me. Tell me: he believes that it—it must come off?"

Frere, taken a little aback by the quick intuitions of this girl, winced, looking at the uninjured and beautiful hand lying at his elbow.

"They are my one charm," she said slowly to herself.

And, as he had formulated no opinion as yet on her points, he did not challenge the words. He was a man who generally said little, thought a good deal, and eschewed compliments.

Suddenly she laid hold of his bronzed capable fingers, and, clinging to them, said under her breath, gaspingly:

"Save it, save it for me if you can! Don't listen to him! His sympathies are deadened! Use your own judgment!"

It had urged him all along to disagree with this once-brilliant, half-saddened little man; but he did not tell her this, only calmed her with a brief matter-of-fact word, and told her she must not waste her powers in fancies.

Then she looked at him straight out of her wide, fearless eyes; and he turned and took out his watch, not choosing to acknowledge to himself that she had read his thoughts.

It wanted fifteen minutes to the departure of the London express.

He put it back again, and when he did so had changed his plans.

"I will do my best for you, Miss ——" his deep eyes met hers pleasantly.

"Miss Marjoram," she replied to them.

And he did his best, being a man as good as his word.

Gill, in his usual, casual, light-hearted fashion, cried off contentedly, and said he would send round Forsythe from the cottage hospital across the moor. A day later Forsythe came, and there was a brief parley between himself and the man whose degrees were far ahead, and whose experience far behind his own. And then a faint odour of chloroform filled one wing of the old inn, and an hour afterwards Miss Mary Marjoram woke to a knowledge that the crushed hand had been saved in the hope of final restoration.

"Not beautiful now," she said next day to Frere, when he came to see how she was progressing; "but I thank you. And I thank God that it was not my right hand."

She considered the sound limb pensively, stretching and spreading the long slim fingers with a mournful smile. "It can still work and accomplish."

"What?" he asked, to divert her thoughts. "Samplers? No—those were our grandmothers' right, weren't they. Antimacassars? Our mothers claim those. But you of to-day demand—nothing."

His sarcasm did not escape her. She lay back on her pillow smiling thoughtfully.

"You dislike the wide field for us," she said. "Why?"

"I will tell you to-morrow; you have talked enough for to-day; and I want you to give me your friends' address, so that I may write to them."

She coloured suddenly. "That," she said, "you needn't trouble about. I am an orphan." And though, when she was established on the sofa in the big parlour below, he came often and regularly to see her, she never spoke to him once of her belongings.

Of other things they talked much.

His distaste for society and society women did not touch him in his intercourse with this stranger: she was of another world—full of simple candid questions and variable whims—now eager in defence of this modern development, now strangely indifferent, even ignorant, on another; a puzzle that by its very complexity interested and attracted him curiously. One day he would leave her, sure in his opinion that such ingenuousness could be but the outcome of an uninstructed mind; the next, by some quick grip of a subject, she had persuaded him that her ignorance was simulated. And as the days grew into weeks, the charm of her individuality grew too.

He had gone back to his brother's house at Dun Moor; but generally found some excuse or other for riding over to the *King's Arms*, Brescoe.

John Frere chaffed him for his devotion to a "case;" but Mrs. John shook her head and remembered that misogynists—and Worsley had always professed himself one—are converted by the simple medium of a glance.

One day she drove over with flowers, grapes, and a little patronage to see the invalid. "Phyllida" was the name she had bestowed on the stranger, to meet the sort of adjectives with which her brother-in-law had painted her.

Now Mrs. John was a brisk wide-awake little person, who prided herself on reading riddles, and came to Brescoe quite assured that she would quickly find out whether the young woman possessed a grandfather, mind, or manner.

But Miss Marjoram, reading letters in the wide window with a pucker upon her broad white brow, was in her most uncommunicative mood.

"Simple, ingenuous, timid! My dear Worsley, she is the veriest bit of ice—disdainful ice, too! How blind men are!" cried the small lady on her return to Dun Moor Manor.

Mr. Worsley Frere, who was putting a few sporting and scientific trophies into a box, turned his deep eyes on his sister-in-law doubtfully. "Are we?" said he. "I suppose we are."

To prove how blind, he felt himself impelled to ride over to the old coaching-inn for the second time in three days.

Mrs. John watched him start, and standing under the venerable porch said to herself, "Phyllida, indeed! But your learned man is always a bat!"

To the bat, nevertheless, Miss Marjoram accorded her usual bright smile.

"You have brought them! How nice of you. You give me such peeps into an unknown world that I forgot my enforced rest."

He opened the box he had brought with him, and spread out these signs of his activities before her—photographs neatly mounted with infinitesimal notes at the foot of each; specimens of the African flora and fauna, and scraps of all sorts; and with her hands folded in the pathetic attitude he had begun to know so well, she listened to his description of the expeditions in which each item had been secured, and laughed and sighed her comments.

Suddenly, with a change from the wistful to the peremptory, "Mr. Frere," she said, "why do you grudge the wide field to women in a world where there is so much to do and see?"

"They are unfitted for it. Home should be their province."

She laughed disdainfully. "Home! The word is nothing to some people if it is everything to others. With you, I suppose, it is meant to cover a multitude of desires. But it doesn't often. If you, keen on scaling mountain tops or crossing deserts, had been condemned to tread feather-beds—how would you have liked it? Men are so——" She halted.

"So what?" he asked, amused at this unexpected display of temper.

But she was laughing now, with the childlike look in her eyes. "So discriminating and wise. They know just which is the most reprehensible and clamorous among the New Women. Let me see if I can touch them off in right order." She laid her sound hand before her, and beginning with the index-finger said soberly, "First, the lady-orator."

He nodded, smiling; her pretty warmth was diverting.

"Then—the lady-journalist." She paused, with her wide eyes on him questioningly. Her appeal—there was nothing didactic in Mary Marjoram—pleased him in some subtle way.

"Or shall we put the lady-journalist first?" he said, entering into her mood. "She is generally aggressive, square-toed, and badly-dressed."

"Three failings that no wise man would pardon," she agreed meditatively. "Third——"

But just then Mrs. Greenfield entered with tea, and she dismissed the subject with a half-petulant laugh. "Don't let us waste ebbing daylight over such an unattractive section of society as the advanced woman," she cried. "You haven't told me half about your African adventures."

And with question and answer they whiled away the twilight.

It was two days before he came again—a glowing October evening.

"Dr. Forsythe says I am almost well. I shall go next week. I must get back to work."

"Work?" he said, for in her playful dependent ways she had never struck him as a working woman.

She laughed low at his perplexity. "Hats and bonnets must be made, you see, Mr. Frere, even though the season is over." And though she had not declared herself a milliner in so many words, her remark sent an odd stab through his big frame.

He got up and went to the window.

"This being so," she went on cheerfully, "you see how much, how very much I owe you, who saved my hand to me to stitch and seam and gather pence. Mr. Frere, I thank—I do thank you."

He shrugged his shoulders irritably. "It was nothing."

"Well, 'nothing' if you will. *That* is your point of view. It isn't mine."

He stood still, staring at the yellow sky and the bare, far moors.

"Miss Marjoram, do you believe in marriage between people of different tastes?" he presently asked, abruptly. "Do you think, for instance, that an artist would be happy with an artist—a literary man with a literary woman?"

"Most probably not," she said shortly.

They were silent for a time; then she resumed in a different tone: "I have been quite happy here alone out of the beaten track. I wonder—I wonder how your holiday has agreed with you? A little pause in an adventurous life—a full-stop between two sentences—is that it?"

"Yes," he said carelessly, "a parenthesis—a pleasant parenthesis."

He didn't know it would be his last word with her at Brescoe. When he rode up a few days later, he found Miss Marjoram had gone. She had been sent for suddenly—abroad, Mrs. Greenfield said. The telegram was lying on the table. He picked it up mechanically.

It was addressed to the Honourable Mary Marjoram by Lady Joanna Pierpoint at Bordighera, and said merely, "Come at once."

"It seems," remarked the landlady, standing by, "that she was quite a great lady—a writer, and rich, with my Lady Joanna Pierpoint for aunt, and all sorts of fine connections. But she had disagreed with them. The old lady wanted her to stay at home and do nothing, and Miss Marjoram wanted to go out and do a great deal. She told me she got tired of sitting on a cushion and sewing a fine seam. Well, it's everyone to their tastes. And, whatever hers were, she was the pleasantest-spoken young lady I ever came across."

Worsley Frere rode home slowly, and going, found himself face to face with a problem. A great blank had suddenly entered into his life, and he was trying to argue it away. He laboured for a night and a day, and then he told Mrs. John Frere that he was going to take a run to the Continent preparatory to his voyage to Africa.

It was just a week later that he came across a slight figure leaning

—in a brief absence from a sick room—towards the sleeping Mediterranean. The palms and villas of Bordighera were around; behind, steeply and sharply, rose the picturesque buildings of the old town, the cathedral dominating them.

He was a man of prompt measures, and, having examined his heart, knew it. "What made you do it?" he said quietly, sitting down beside her and displacing an armful of roses she had laid along the seat.

She turned, and a quick unbidden glow sprang into her eyes.

"A love of the unconventional," she said lightly; "the same reason that made me shy against poor Aunt Joanna's social routine and turn journalist. I came to Brescoe to contribute a column on its cottage-hospital, and I met—yes, it must have been there I met you. I wonder, shall we meet again, for I must go into my invalid now. She is very ill. Good-bye."

Her casual manner angered him.

"This is ridiculously inadequate to the occasion," he said firmly, getting up and standing so that she could not pass him. "We meet after ten days—days that have meant much to me—and you wonder flippantly whether we shall see each other again."

"Yes," she acquiesced, with her eyes unflinchingly on him. Her hands were trembling though.

"Don't you know that I have travelled two days to see you—to ask an explanation which our frequent intercourse and your whim justify?"

"Whim!" she said coldly; "to you at least I am not called on to explain my actions. The time was a mere breathing space—a lull. I couldn't help the accident, any more than I could help being indebted to you."

He folded his arms, looking at her, but her eyes were on the curve of the bay that held the silent sea.

"You could help the deception. Why should you have pretended to be what you were not?"

She faced round on him suddenly.

"Because," she said fiercely—"because I happen to be one of those unlucky women who can't find their whole content in nursing a poodle; writing twenty letters a morning; driving out once a day; and being fawned on for their expectations. I got away from it all—for a year. It was Aunt Joanna's arrangement, though we quarrelled over it. And I went in for writing. But I didn't see why, having taken up my anonymity, I should drop it again. I was Miss Marjoram simply—a woman with a calling when I left Aunt Joanna. Why should I be anything more to you, of whom I knew so little?"

"We met under exceptional circumstances. Our intercourse——"

She interrupted him. "Our intercourse! What was it? A parenthesis—a pleasant parenthesis in two busy lives. It has passed.

And the sentence goes on as if it had never been. It was your own phrase."

"My own phrase!" he echoed. "Perhaps so—a week ago. Women haven't the monopoly of changing their minds. I have changed mine. That month is sentence, chapter, book itself to me."

She moved from him, fear in her eyes.

"You are jesting, Mr. Frere," she said under her breath. "It is a poor revenge."

"Revenge!" he said, in his deep vibrant tones. "You are hard to melt, still harder to woo. Cannot you tell, Mary—cannot you tell that I am in earnest?"

Over the sea the darkness was stealing; the sibilant croon of the waves came up to their ears from below. But still Mary Marjoram looked over its placid breast, and was silent. To their right, the faint lines of the distant Esterels, Mentone, Monte Carlo, and the grand dim mountains; below, the murmurous Mediterranean; around, unbroken hush wherein two hearts alone seemed to beat.

At last he moved towards her, covering her restored but still delicate hand with his strong one. Then she looked at him, something else than fear dawning in her eyes. If surrender was in them with tears, she would not let it pass into her words.

"I thought the lady-journalist headed the list of your aversions, Mr. Frere?" But the assumption of audacity did not deceive him.

"A week ago. Now, 'If you would sit thus by me every night, I should work better, do you comprehend?'"

She laughed low, recognising the quotation.

"And you believe in marriages between people of the same tastes?" she said.

"Quite!"

"I don't think I do," she said slowly, rising and gathering up the scattered roses. "I shouldn't like to see Mr. Frere married to an 'aggressive, untidy, square-toed person'—his love of the orderly and beautiful would suffer too much."

But in her dainty diaphanous frock, with flowers in her belt, and mirth in her eyes, she stood but a few inches from him and courted his refutation.

"Aggressive, untidy, square-toed!" he repeated.

And suddenly she found herself in his arms, with his kisses on her brow.

"Your own fault, Mary," he said, when he held her at last away from him, all rosy and charming under night's kind shadows. And straightening her old lace ruffles, she merely said resignedly:

"Well, I have warned you. Two of a trade never agree. But——"

"They will!"

And it is sure that the two people who went down the hill towards the little town half an hour later, went hand-in-hand.

PHILLIPA TRENT.

ANECDOTES AND ADVENTURES.

BY LINDON MEADOWS.

I.—FREEMAN'S FLIGHT.

FREEMAN and I were old comrades and friends. We had been boys at school together ; we had crossed the Atlantic together ; we had hunted bears and wolves in the backwoods of Canada together ; we had been college chums together ; we had been ordained together ; and had now settled down as sober divines, he to a curacy in a small county town, and I, after a time, to a sole charge in a little village within an easy walk of him.

As I was by a year or two his senior (a fact of which he did not fail to remind me) he often came over to ask my advice (which generally resulted in his taking his own) upon some parish matter, or when any particular grievance affected his comfort. And there was one which preyed very much on his mind and spirits, viz., the domineering character of the rector under whom he worked. It had been arranged that Freeman should preach alternately with Dr. Blacow, but Dr. Blacow was continually monopolising the pulpit, and making no apology whatever for this infringement of promise and privilege. Freeman naturally felt hurt at such selfish conduct and treatment, and was always full of it whenever we chanced to meet.

"He puts all the sick-visiting on me, except at the best houses and among the more respectable people ; he expects me to take all the poor-class christenings and weddings, reserving for himself those at which there is a prospect of complimentary fees, and I have to officiate at all the funerals, saving where there is a probability of hat-band and gloves, which he sacks with the coolest air imaginable, at the same time comfortably inspecting the texture of the silk and the quality of the kid. I could bear the latter petty impertinences, perhaps, but I cannot bear to be perpetually put aside in the matter of the preaching, which is my right. To outwit me with the greater ease, too, he has taken of late (the congregation have remarked this, and feel highly indignant) to occupying the bottom corner of the pew close to the pulpit stairs, so that, the moment he sees me ready to quit the reading-desk, he can step quietly out and supplant me. The people wish me to preach, and say, 'Freeman, I wouldn't stand it'—nor will Freeman stand it any longer."

"What will you do ?"

"Outwit him, in my turn"—and Freeman removed the ash of his cigar neatly with his little finger.

"But I would carefully avoid any indecent scene or squabble in church; nothing is more disgraceful. And, do you know, my late rector treated me much in the same way, though it is true that he made ample amends every now and then by saying, 'Meadows, my horse is eating his head off in the stable; I wish you would have him for a fortnight—and the carriage too, if you like.' Or, 'Meadows, a friend of mine has sent me a hamper of wine, and you will do me a service by accepting half-a-dozen bottles.' Or, 'Meadows, Lord W—— has presented me with a couple of brace of pheasants; pray relieve me of one of them; indeed, my man has already orders, etc.'"

"Ah! but there are no little extenuating circumstances of the kind to be taken into consideration; there is no horse, there is no wine, there are no pheasants, in my case, so things are widely different. And with regard to any indecent squabble or scene, all shall be managed in the neatest and quietest way imaginable. To-morrow night shall settle it; come over and see. Blacow is sure to ask you to read the lessons."

"I am sorry that I can't; I have a confirmation class after evening service."

"Then, as you can't *see*, you shall *hear*. Ask your clerk to take a walk; he will be able to describe to you my *modus operandi*."

Jonathan Daw did. I took him into my study (this was about ten o'clock on the Sunday night), brewed him a glass of hot negus, a beverage to which he had no particular antipathy, and, as he stirred it pleasantly, I said—

"Now, Jonathan, proceed. Let me know precisely what took place to-night at —— church."

"Yes, your reverence; but I can hardly tell you for laughing. Never has such a droll thing occurred since churches were first built. I arrived rather late, and there were a number of people in the porch trying to get in, for news of what was likely to take place had spread, and there was a crush for seats. They said Mr. Freeman was going to hold his own to-night, and everybody hoped he would, as they liked him very much, and couldn't abear Dr. Blacow. All went on quiet and as usual to the end of the prayers. Mr. Freeman was reading them, and Dr. Blacow, in his stiffest white choker——"

"I object to that familiarity, Jonathan; it is not respectful to the cloth."

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Meadows, and won't offend again. Well, as I was a-saying, Dr. Blacow, in his tallest clerical cravat" (Jonathan gave a little cough behind his hand), "had taken up his position at the bottom of a pew close to the pulpit-stairs, which gave him, as they say, greatly the 'advantage of the situation.' Mr. Freeman didn't seem at all put out, however, and waited where he was until the second verse of the hymn had been sung. Dr. Blacow always goes up at the

end of the *third*, but before he had set foot on the first step of the stairs the thing was done, and half the congregation sprang to their feet in a great state of excitement. I believe they would have cheered had they dared. What did Mr. Freeman do, sir, but this: There was a stout old pole that used to stand in a corner by the vestry door. It had held a knightly banner, they tell me, in former years, but that had tumbled to pieces by degrees, and the sexton commonly used the stick, with an extinguisher fixed on the top, to put out the lights after service. Mr. Freeman had previously placed this conveniently at hand, though it attracted no notice leaning behind a projection of the wall. At the right moment, knowing that the pulpit-stairs were closed against him, he mounted on the stool, measured his ground, planted the pole in the midst of a group of paupers between the two desks, which are about ten feet apart (you know he is a splendid leaper, your reverence; a hedge half the height of a house is a trifle to him), and swung himself as cleverly from one to the other as though he had practised the trick half his life. He was up, and in, and down on his knees, with his face on the cushion, and saying a prayer, almost before the rector could draw breath. Dr. Blacow rushed half-way up the pulpit-steps to prevent Mr. Freeman from going on, but the people cried, 'No, no,' and the Doctor left the church noisily, shaking his fist, and ordering his wife and daughter to follow him. And you should have seen numbers of the congregation, on going out of church, push forward to shake Mr. Freeman's hand and congratulate him. I shall never forget it as long as I live."

"Humph! I presume not; it was rather a new feature in a church service. Thank you: good-night, Mr. Daw."

As soon as the door was closed, I sat down and had a hearty laugh.

You will not feel surprised to hear that the Bishop of — requested the pleasure of an early call from Mr. Freeman, and that the latter cheerfully accepted the invitation.

The Bishop did not offer his hand, but simply said, with a grave face, "Take a chair, Mr. Freeman," and Mr. Freeman, not at all abashed, but manly, radiant, and good-humoured, did as requested.

The Bishop, after poking the fire with a good deal of deliberation, regarded him sternly for a few moments, and then asked, "Do you know what I am thinking, Mr. Freeman?"

"I cannot presume to say, but I know that your Lordship's thoughts, as well as acts, are always of a kind and generous nature."

The Bishop grew still more stern, and turned over the pages of an ugly-looking volume at his elbow.

"I am considering, sir, whether your suspension is to be for a term of *two* or *three* years. Unfortunately I find no case in point here; no offence, I regret to say, bearing any resemblance to the unparalleled and extraordinary one of which you have been guilty."

Freeman murmured his regrets also,

"That stupid, pig-headed old Blacow has always been a trouble and anxiety to me."

"I am sorry to hear it, my Lord."

"Eh, sir? I was not addressing you; did I say anything aloud?"

"A barely audible remark, my Lord; I think it was something complimentary to my rector, Dr. Blacow."

"Oh, well; it is lucky for you, Mr. Freeman (though there is a long one from your incensed rector, of a by-no-means gratifying nature) that I have a heap of letters here, written by different members of St. Mark's congregation, all bearing testimony to your parochial activity, kindness to the poor, attention to the sick, tasteful reading and eloquent pulpit power."

"No, no, my Lord. This is a highly exaggerated view of things I cannot really——"

The Bishop frowned and held up his hand for silence. "And here, among the rest, is a lengthy epistle from my old friend Lady L——, giving me an exact account of everything that took place. Let me refresh my memory a little."

His Lordship read for a minute or two and suddenly burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, holding on by the sides of his chair. Then he grew supernaturally solemn again (Freeman thought quite repulsive), and said, "You must apologise to Dr. Blacow, Mr. Freeman."

"To your *Lordship* most humbly and sincerely, but not to Dr. Blacow, whose conduct has been highly selfish, overbearing, and abominable throughout."

A silence, broken only by the muffled sound of the Bishop's footsteps to and fro on the study carpet. He then drew up the blind a little, looked out of the window, rubbed his chin, returned to his chair, and sat down.

"You must make me a solemn promise, Mr. Freeman, that nothing of this kind shall ever happen again."

"I promise it, my Lord, on the word of a clergyman and a gentleman."

"Never?"

"*Never*," with great earnestness (as though there were the remotest probability of such a thing occurring twice)!

"Humph! Have the goodness to understand, Mr. Freeman, that I am highly angry and indignant—— Hark!" taking his arm in a friendly way, "that is the luncheon-bell. I will introduce you to Mrs. —— as a fair specimen of a daring and presumptuous young curate who was within a hairbreadth of losing his gown!"

II.—A PARSON'S PERPLEXITY.

I HAD accompanied some friends to an old church situated in a remote village in Worcestershire. It was a *very* old church; the reading-desk wore the appearance of a dilapidated cattle-pen; the pews were like loose boxes for hunters. There was a gallery for interesting boys to eat apples and crack nuts in; and, in fact, everything else to correspond.

It was the last time the Sunday afternoon service was to commence so late as half-past three o'clock, as the year was growing old, and the days were fast drawing in, and the churchwarden, who was a saving man, could not afford the luxury of lamps or candles. The rector, Dr. P., a kind and worthy member of his profession, but not *quite* one of the modern Ritualistic school, had his private misgivings about being able to deliver the sermon before darkness overtook him, and those misgivings were doomed to be painfully realised. He had made many serious efforts to decipher his rather illegible manuscript; he took a still closer view of it; he coughed; he stopped, and went on again at the rate of five words per minute; then three—then two—and at length, pushing back his spectacles, and leaning over the pulpit (which was so high, that once perched there, you might easily have touched the roof of the sacred edifice with your walking-stick) said plaintively:

"My friends, I cannot see; will one of you be good enough to fetch me a candle?"

The clerk, who repaired the village shoes and collected the taxes, feeling himself called upon, accordingly went out, and, after an absence of ten minutes, returned in depressed spirits, saying:

"Your reverence, the people are all out, and the houses locked up, and mine is a goodish bit of a walk from here, as your honour knows."

"John Plant," said the rector solemnly, "you live nearest, go and bring a light!"

But that gentleman, being no more successful, observed that "his missus had gone to a camp meeting—more's the pity—and taken the key in her pocket."

"Luke Cadger, perhaps you will oblige me," and out bustled that worthy, reappearing presently in an elated manner bearing a greasy old stable lantern of the last century, which he carried up the long flight of pulpit stairs with tender solicitude, eyeing the blinking farthing candle inside meantime a little doubtfully, but kindly snuffing it with his fingers (wetting them first) before presentation.

Thus encouraged, Dr. P., murmuring some thanks, and holding up the borrowed luminary by the ring, with some difficulty made out another half-sentence, then turned the lantern round to its less dismal

side, but burned himself slightly in the process, and as a last resource, opened the tallowy door, in the vain hope of obtaining superior illumination. The wick of the farthing candle, however, having developed an ugly mushroom-shaped excrescence at its apex, the flame became gradually dimmer, and dimmer, and dimmer; then it flickered for a moment, spit, sputtered, emitted a frightful glare, and went out so suddenly that Dr. P. gave an involuntary jump, knocked over his sermon, and let the horn receptacle fall from his hand with a crash on to the bald pate of the clerk below—to the great delight of the whole congregation, whose gravity having been already too highly taxed, found relief in an audible titter.

This served as the grand *dénouement*, for Dr. P., remarking that he couldn't for the life of him remember the words of the usual closing prayer and benediction without his book, wound up by saying, "God bless you all! Retire to your homes; and please take notice that Divine service will commence next Sunday afternoon at half-past two, instead of an hour later, as before."

III.—AUNT JANE.

THE following also relates to my friend Freeman, and is told in his words:—

I am not by any means in the habit of descanting upon the frailties of the fair sex; indeed, so far from that, it is my wont to throw a veil over their little failings and foibles, and delight in painting only the bright side of their characters; but the elderly female who forms the subject of the present brief sketch was an exception to my general experience, and I therefore do myself the pleasure of introducing her to your acquaintance.

She was a hale, stout old dame of between seventy and eighty years of age, and wore one of those antiquated brown wigs that have ever been my utter horror and detestation. It was about a week, or perhaps a fortnight, after I had settled down in my new domicile, that I first saw Aunt Jane's face at the opposite window. There was an air of inquiry and suppressed fright about it; and in a few minutes I was asked, through the medium of a rather dishevelled housemaid, whether I was aware that my dining-room chimney was on fire?

I immediately repaired (without my hat) into the middle of the street, and took an airy observation; then sent word, with my compliments, to Miss Hancock, that none of my chimneys were on fire, I was happy to say, but I had some slight suspicion that my next-door neighbour's was; thanking her at the same time for the kind interest she took in my own personal welfare and the safety of the premises.

About three days after this Aunt Jane despatched her Abigail again, at a run, to intimate that the girl who was cleaning my upper windows was in a dangerous position, and had better be cautioned, if she at all valued her neck. I accordingly hastened to the spot, and drew in the offending damsel by the heels, fearing that any other and more polite mode of rescue might occasion alarm and precipitate her suddenly on to the flags beneath. This was on the 20th of June.

On the 25th. "Miss Hancock's compliments to Mr. Freeman, and she cannot help wondering, on a bright day like this, what he can be thinking about in not having his upper rooms properly ventilated."

I thanked Aunt Jane for this timely hint, and immediately availed myself of it. I raised my hat, too, and bowed, as I passed presently through the front door, and saw her gazing sternly in my direction.

June 30.—"Miss Hancock's compliments to Mr. Freeman, and she is much surprised to find that he can have the bad taste to encourage a vile Punch and Judy man to exhibit before his house and disgust the whole neighbourhood."

Reply: "Mr. Freeman's compliments to Miss Hancock, and his children, never having yet witnessed the Punch and Judy performance in question, he ventured to sanction it; but he is sorry to have offended Miss H., and will endeavour to do better in future."

All now passed off well till the 5th of July, when "Miss Hancock" (no compliments this time) "is annoyed to observe that Mr. Freeman has just thrown out some halfpence to a female ballad-singer, thereby encouraging idleness and a vagabond spirit, as well as causing offence to the ears of all persons of refined taste and feelings."

"Mr. Freeman regrets his injudiciousness, but the woman is a widow, and blind in one eye. He is sorry to notice that she is gone to execute another ballad in front of Miss H.'s residence. He did not connive in any way at this new celebration of her vocal powers, and trusts that it will prove of short duration."

July 9.—"Miss Hancock's compliments to Mr. Freeman, and hopes, for common decency's sake, that he will have the grass removed from the corners of his doorstep. Perhaps he is not conscious of the unsightly appearance it presents."

I went out instantly to look, and by the aid of my eyeglass perceived that there certainly were a few sprouting blades of the offensive herbage in question.

"Mr. Freeman's compliments, and is obliged for Miss Hancock's hint about the grass under the doorstep. It is all he has, he is sorry to say—no pasture-land going with the house—but it shall be grubbed up at once."

July 20.—"Miss Hancock presents her compliments to Mr. Freeman, and hopes that he will not feel hurt by a hint that his sermon yesterday morning was far too pictorial. She objects to

illustration and poetical imagery in grave compositions of this nature."

Reply: "Mr. Freeman's polite regards to Miss Hancock, and regrets his bad taste. He had fallen into the mistake of taking Christ as his model in the treatment of a subject rather than certain modern divines, who, though very good men, are but dreary preachers at best, and perhaps do a kind thing after all in sending their congregations to sleep."

July 29.—"Miss Hancock's compliments. Does not Mr. Freeman think his pony a little dangerous? And would it not be prudent, for his children's sake, to exchange it for some quieter and less-spirited animal? It did nothing but whisk its tail and sneeze all the time it was standing at the door yesterday, and a fatal accident might have happened at any moment."

Reply: "Mr. Freeman's compliments. He finds his pony quite tractable, and, indeed, the poor beast is rather a favourite with his young people. Mr. F. feels sorry at not being able to act upon Miss H.'s thoughtful suggestion respecting the donkey. Will she forgive him for saying that, as a rule, he is not fond of them. He thanks her again, and will try to put a stop to the pony's sneezing, but is doubtful about the whisking of tail."

August 8.—"Miss Hancock presents her compliments to Mr. Freeman, and fears he cannot be aware that there is a sick woman—Martha Cluck—in the neighbouring street, who would, no doubt, be glad of a pastoral visit."

Reply: "Mr. Freeman presents his compliments to Miss Hancock, and has much pleasure in informing her that the sick woman named has been visited by him regularly twice every week for the last month or more. She is in a very reduced state, however, and a little port wine, with an occasional arrowroot or sago pudding, would be of material service. Mr. F. feels less delicacy in pressing for these supplies at Miss H.'s hands, as he knows her great benevolence of heart and readiness on all occasions to oblige."

Having now—to use a vulgar expression—been "hauled over the coals" to (I presumed) Aunt Jane's heart's content, and to the utmost limits of my clerical forbearance, I began, with a vindictiveness worthy of a Christian, to think that some quiet little reprisal would not be altogether unfair, or out of place. I, accordingly, bending a glance over the way, sought an opening for the point of my rapier, and, with the assistance of an attendant evil spirit, soon found one. Suspended just within Aunt Jane's opened bedroom window, I had often observed a picturesque portion of that lady's wardrobe, and the constant sight of it irritated me.

"Mr. Freeman presents his compliments to Miss Hancock, and would it not be advisable to remove the toilet attraction accidentally exhibited to public gaze, as a sudden gust of wind might at any moment carry it away over the churchyard and into the neighbouring valley."

I watched the effect of this timely warning, and was gratified by the sudden appearance of Aunt Jane's face (the colour of a peony) a second or two afterwards at the bedroom window, and of then seeing the objectionable apparatus snatched viciously from its support, and the window slammed down with considerable violence. It was up again the next minute, however, accompanied by a speedy readjustment of the picturesque article of apparel; and Miss Hancock's housemaid told the baker, who informed the postman, who whispered to my cobb, from whom I received the information, "how that her mistress had stamped her foot several times on the floor, and wondered 'How he dared!' and that more would certainly come of it."

And now we reach the crisis, the culminating point, the grand climax and *dénouement*. I was taken seriously ill, and after a week or two's suffering (there had been sundry bluff inquiries on her part from time to time after my health) Aunt Jane conceived it to be her Christian duty to make a personal call; but on finding the knocker with its upper jaw carefully swathed in flannel (for perfect quiet had been recommended by the doctor), she flew into a towering passion, and demanded, in no gentle tones, of an accidental foot-passenger, what was the meaning of it? how a miserable upstart curate of a parish could have the presumption—the audacity—to muffle up the only means by which benevolently-disposed people were to announce their presence at his door? With that, finding the said knocker and bell unavailable for successful assault and battery, she caught up her huge green gingham umbrella, with its massive knob, and beat upon the upper panel furiously.

I awoke, like Childe Harold, "with a start," and learning from the Rectory groom (who, entering by the back premises, had just brought me up some grapes) the cause of the sudden uproar, cried, "Quick, good fellow, take that jug of water, run to the garret window"—this was situated exactly over the front steps—"pour the contents into the street, and I will give you half a crown for your trouble."

The man touched his forehead with a grin, and performed the service most satisfactorily. Aunt Jane's bonnet, with its liberal decoration of black ribbon, received a fair portion of the descending shower, and I was told that some of the refreshing element even penetrated her shoes. This unexpected attention on my part had the effect of closing our neighbourly communications, and for a month or two I enjoyed an agreeable immunity from the petty provocations and numberless annoyances to which I had so long been subject.

THE NEW TENANTS OF LINDEN LODGE.

A COUNTRY DOCTOR'S STORY

BY T. W. SPEIGHT.

I.

LINDEN LODGE had stood empty for upwards of a couple of years, and seemed likely to remain so for an indefinite time to come. I had questioned Benyon, the house agent, about it more than once, only to be told, with a shake of the head, that nobody ever inquired about it, and, in his opinion, that nobody ever would. Yes, for two long years and more, as I drove past it on my rounds to my outlying patients, the great staring board affixed to the entrance gates announcing that the Lodge was to be let, "furnished or unfurnished," had offended me like an eyesore.

All the greater, consequently, was my astonishment—and, I may add, my satisfaction, for I have a great dislike for empty houses—when Benyon stopped me one day in the High Street on purpose to inform me that the Lodge had at length found a tenant in the person of a certain Colonel Delamark, an American, who had taken it as it stood, ready furnished, but only for a term of one year.

He had made his appearance at Benyon's office the previous afternoon, and the agent had at once driven him out in his dog-cart to view the house, the distance of which, from Sandyford market-place, is about a couple of miles. A very cursory examination of it had satisfied the stranger, who had thereupon announced his intention of becoming its tenant. The premises were to be thoroughly cleaned down in the course of the following week, at the end of which the Colonel and his belongings would enter upon possession.

When, as is usual in such cases, asked to furnish the agent with a reference either to his banker or to some person of approved respectability, the Colonel had smiled and said, "I guess that's pre-cisely what I'm not in a position to supply you with. You see, I have but lately arrived from the States on some special business connected with a lawsuit, in which my wife is interested. But if I'm unable, as a stranger, to give you the reference you ask for, I can pay you half a year's rent in advance, which, I guess, will answer the same purpose."

It was an offer which Benyon, as he told me, was fain to accept.

Squire Heyland, as he was called, the late tenant, and owner to boot, of Linden Lodge, which he had inherited from a distant relative, had, from the time of making his home there, led the life of a recluse.

This, it may have been, was, in some measure, due to the fact that his only son, a young man of three or four-and-twenty, was subject to intermittent attacks of lunacy, at which seasons he was shut up with an attendant in a suite of rooms set specially apart for him. The whisper went about that on one occasion he had made a desperate attempt on his father's life, but if such were really the case, Squire Heyland was never known to speak of it.

Although the son died some five years before his father, the latter never broke through his reserved and secluded habits. Few indeed were they among his neighbours who knew him except by sight, but of those few I happened to be one. My more intimate knowledge of him originated through my being called in to attend his son during the young man's last illness. Mr. Heyland I found to be a courteous, scholarly man, who, while living out his life far from the madding crowd, yet kept himself *au courant* with everything of note that went on in the great world outside.

His own end, when it came, was very sudden. His servant, on entering his room one morning, found him seated in the library chair in which he had left him over-night. He had been dead a number of hours. By his elbow was the burnt-out lamp, at his feet the book which had fallen from his fingers at the moment of his dread summons.

Linden Lodge, I may here add, is a substantial, three-storeyed, stuccoed erection, dating back some seventy or eighty years, roomy and comfortable inside, but with no architectural pretensions whatever. It stands in its own grounds, which do not exceed three or four acres in extent. It was Squire Heyland's whim to have these grounds enclosed by a wall between six and seven feet in height. Admittance is gained through a pair of handsome wrought-iron gates, close by which is the Lodge; but the view is so circumscribed and shut in by huge clumps of laurel and rhododendron that but little of the house is visible from the high-road.

II.

COLONEL DELAMARK, his wife, daughter and attendants, arrived at Linden Lodge in due course, reaching there some time in the middle of the night, but, so it was currently reported, not by way of our own station at Sandyford. There is another station at Ickfield, five miles off, where flies and other conveyances are to be had at any hour, and they would seem to have alighted there and to have driven the rest of the way.

It soon became evident that the Colonel had brought with him whatever domestics or servants of any kind might be required for the needs of his new establishment.

A grumpy, irascible old fellow, who had never been seen in the

neighbourhood before, was installed as lodge-keeper; while a sour-visaged, middle-aged woman, presumably the housekeeper, proceeded to call upon sundry of the Sandyford tradespeople and order goods and comestibles of various kinds. All articles so ordered were delivered at the Lodge, no tradesman or his assistant being allowed to penetrate beyond the park gates. An ample supply of fuel, it was reported, had been laid in a couple of days prior to the family's appearance on the scene.

Upwards of a week passed after the Colonel's arrival without, so far as was known, his having once set foot outside the gates of his own small demesne.

Then, on a certain fine afternoon, he, his wife, and their daughter, a child about eight years old, were seen by quite a number of people as they were driving out in an open carriage hired at the Swan Hotel; and thereafter, in favourable weather, I often encountered them in the course of my afternoon rounds.

Colonel Delamark was a tall, lean man, with a long sallow face, keen black eyes under bushy brows, and rather long straggling black hair. He was close shaven except for a chin tuft, the waxed ends of which were twisted into the shape of a small spiral. Mrs. Delamark had a pale and rather interesting face, but it seemed to me (a part of whose business it is to study faces) that of a woman who suffered in secret, but whether her suffering resulted from a mental or a bodily ailment was more than I could determine.

The season was late autumn, and both the Colonel and his wife were well wrapped up in costly furs.

It goes without saying that in a small rural neighbourhood like that of Sandyford, where nearly everybody is addicted to discussing other people's business, the new tenants of Linden Lodge soon became a fruitful subject for gossip, speculation and surmises innumerable.

Of course it was excessively tantalising that the ascertainable facts in connection with them should be so few and meagre. They saw no company, and they went nowhere, while such of their servants as were ever seen in the town, kept a close mouth and held themselves coldly aloof from all intercourse with the worthy if somewhat inquisitive Sandyfordians.

The Vicar of St. Kenet's was the only outsider who succeeded in penetrating beyond the park gates; but when the Reverend Gavin Dutton had set his heart on cajoling a subscription out of any one, he was not easily baulked. His air, when he chose, was a very magisterial one, and for once the old lodge-keeper was overawed. The Colonel, he afterwards reported, received him most courteously, and produced a very favourable impression on him, which, however, might possibly be due in some measure to the fact that he left Linden Lodge a richer man by five guineas than he had entered it. Mrs. Delamark he did not see, the state of her health being alleged in excuse for her non-appearance.

But the Rev. Gavin, it may be said, was the exception which proves the rule.

Squire Heyland's reason for choosing to live the life of a recluse had been known to everybody, but what lay at the back of Colonel Delamark's determination to copy his example was known to none. People might wonder and surmise, but at the end they merely found themselves at the point from which they started. Yes, it was very tantalising!

III.

At length there came a day when, as in Squire Heyland's time, the doors of Linden Lodge were opened to admit me, although they might be shut against all the world beside. As in the first case, so in the second, it was my profession that furnished me with the magic *sesame*. Colonel Delamark's little daughter had been taken ill, and I was summoned post haste to the Lodge.

I found the child to be suffering from a rather severe attack of diphtheria, and I told the parents plainly that I ought to have been called in before.

"You are quite right, Dr. Monkhouse," said the mother. "We ought to have sent for you yesterday, perhaps even on Monday; but Eugene would have it that our darling was merely suffering from a slight, feverish cold which a couple of days of home-nursing would put to rights."

There was not a shadow of reproach in her tone, but something seemed to tell me that not till the child was seen to be in absolute danger had her prayer for medical help been acceded to by her husband, and then not without reluctance.

The Colonel was standing by, his long lean face an impassive mask. For a moment or two no one spoke. Then he said:

"Yes, as things have turned out, it might have been as well to have called you in before, doctor. But I'm not one who holds with coddling children. I was never coddled, and I saw no reason why my daughter should be." Then, after a brief pause he added: "But Winnie has a splendid *constitooshun*—not her mother's *constitooshun*, but mine—and she'll pull through first-rate, never fear," and with a curt nod, he turned on his heel and sauntered out of the room.

The Colonel spoke with an unmistakable American accent, and it was evident that his education lacked something in the way of polish and refinement; his manner, however, was not deficient in a certain measure of courtesy, even if the courtesy was of a somewhat frigid kind. But for him I cared nothing; it was the poor mother whom I pitied.

Mrs. Delamark impressed me as being one of those women who

have been schooled by hard circumstance into subduing all outward exhibition of the feelings which lie closest to the heart. Her manner was very quiet and outwardly unemotional, but in her large dark eyes could be read something of the silent agony at work below. It seemed to me—but I may have been mistaken—that she breathed an inaudible sigh of relief when her husband left the room.

"My child is very ill, is she not?" she presently whispered.

"To say that her condition is not a somewhat serious one would not be to speak the truth," I gravely replied.

"But you do not give her up, doctor?" It seemed as if her heart stood still while she waited for my answer.

"Give her up, my dear madam? Certainly not! Her condition is by no means so desperate as that! Indeed, I have every hope that, under Providence, we shall soon succeed in bringing her round."

Before I could divine her intention, she had seized one of my hands and pressed it passionately to her lips.

"Mrs. Delamark!" I exclaimed, in grave astonishment.

"Pray forgive me!" she pleaded. "You do not know—how should you—with what blessed hope your words have filled my heart. Where all was dark before—for, somehow, I had got to fear the worst—a blessed ray of sunlight now penetrates."

Then, with clasped hands pressed close to her bosom, she went on:

"Doctor Monkhouse, she is my only child, and if I were to lose her I could not live. Nay, what do I say? I *would* not live! On that point my mind has long been made up. She is the one, the only creature that for me makes life endurable. If she were to go I should follow her, and that before the rising of next day's sun. I have vowed it. One grave should hold us both."

I was shocked to hear her speak thus, for I was convinced they were no idle words she was giving utterance to; and yet they were spoken so quietly, and with such an evenly-modulated voice, that any listener seated at a little distance, but out of reach of the words themselves, might have been excused for imagining that her remarks were concerned with nothing more important than the ordinary commonplace topics of the day. But the very quietude of her manner, as it seemed to me, only rendered more impressive that which fell from her lips.

"What a life-history must hers be, did one but know it!" I could not help saying to myself, as I stood up and let my eyes rest for a moment on her bowed head. It was no place of mine to chide her for her words, however rash and ill-considered they might seem. All I could do before I left her was to cheer her still further in the hope that her child would recover. And that I did not fail to do.

But it seemed as if the hopes I had bidden Mrs. Delamark cherish were not destined to be realised. When next I called at the Lodge little Winnie was unmistakably worse, and by the following day still graver symptoms had declared themselves. By this time the mother's

eyes had become the home of a dull, stony despair which found no relief either in speech or tears. She locked up her agony in her bosom, as though she were jealous lest anyone should want to share it with her.

As for the Colonel, he maintained an unruffled demeanour, but it by no means follows that he was not affected—perhaps profoundly so—by the illness of his child. Some men have such control over their emotions that hardly any shock serves to break down the barrier which, of their own accord, they build up between themselves and those who are, or ought to be, nearest and dearest to them.

Such a man Colonel Delamark may have been. I do not know. He was a stranger to me, and it was not for me to judge him.

The child's case was becoming desperate, so on this, the third day after I had been called in, I proposed to the Colonel that I should perform the operation of tracheotomy. He agreed without the slightest demur, and when all that the operation meant was explained to his wife, she, after a momentary shudder, said :

"Yes—yes ; let whatever Dr. Monkhouse proposes be tried. If it is not, my child will die ; should she die after it has been tried the end will be the same, and we shall know then it is not heaven's will that we should keep her."

When, however, I proposed that one of my colleagues should be present during the operation, I was met by such a strenuous opposition on the part of both parents that my wishes in the matter were overborne. The Colonel even went so far as to assert, with far more emphasis than the occasion called for, that, whether the child lived or died, the foot of no second medical man should cross his threshold.

Not to linger over this part of my narrative, it will be enough to say that the operation in question was successfully performed a few hours later. To the little sufferer it brought immediate relief, and before long she sank into a profound sleep, out of which I had good hopes that she would awake to returning health.

As for Mrs. Delamark, when I left the Lodge, I left behind me another woman from the one I had found on entering it. At parting, the Colonel wrung my hand after a fashion that crippled it for some minutes to come.

IV.

WHEN a couple of days had gone by my little patient had advanced so far on the road to convalescence that I felt I could leave her for a time with safety, more especially, should any symptoms of a relapse show themselves, as I had every confidence in the skill of Dr. Diprose, at that time my assistant, but later on my partner.

The fact was that I had set my heart on running up to London in

order to see my nephew Tom off on his way to Natal. Tom, who had lost both his parents while still a schoolboy, had run a little wild during the last few years; but although I had often grieved about him, he had never done anything to alienate the warm affection I had always felt for him. At length, however, he seemed to have seen the folly of his ways, and, with what remained to him of the fortune left him by his father, was about to make a fresh start in life in a far-off land.

Well, I saw him off in due course, and at parting pressed into his hand a little packet of bank-notes I had brought with me for the purpose. That he would find them useful on reaching his new home I did not doubt.

I had not been in London for a number of years, and as I had several old friends there, I determined to utilise the opportunity for looking them up, more especially as just then I happened to have no cases on my list at home but such as might be safely entrusted to Diprose.

Thus it fell out that I did not get back to Sandysford till nine o'clock on the evening of the third day after I left it. My limbs were cramped with my long railway ride, and as the evening was fine and dry I determined to walk home, going round by way of Linden Lodge (although my doing so would take me about a mile and a half out of my direct road) in order to satisfy myself as to the progress made by my youthful patient.

When starting for London, I had driven round by the Lodge on my way to the station. Winnie Delamark was the last of my patients whom I had seen before leaving home, and she would be the first I should see after my return. My only luggage was a hand-bag containing a few toilet requisites. So exquisite was the night, that when I had left the outskirts of the town behind me, and found myself traversing the lonely road which led to the Lodge, I began to hum scraps of song, as if, forsooth, my years and my grey hairs mattered nothing, and I was once again—if only for a very little while—a light-hearted stripling of twenty with the world still before me where to choose.

The grumpy old lodge-keeper favoured me with a scowl as, in response to my tug at the bell, he opened the side door in the park wall and admitted me. Evidently he did not care to be disturbed at such an unseasonable hour. At the Lodge itself the same middle-aged, sour-faced woman, who had opened the door for me on previous occasions, opened it for me to-night. I could not help wondering to myself why Colonel Delamark chose to have such unprepossessing and morose people about him. Then I reflected that, for anything known to me, these very people might be old and trusted dependents, and, as such be preferred by him to strangers.

The only light in the entrance hall was that afforded by a small oil lamp on a centre table. It was a chill and gloomy place at the best,

and to-night I could not repress an involuntary shudder as I crossed its threshold.

Having deposited my hat, cape, hand-bag and umbrella in the hall, I followed the woman upstairs, and was ushered by her into the cosy sitting-room adjoining my patient's bedroom, with which I was already familiar. Here, a minute later, Mrs. Delamark joined me.

She came forward with a bright smile which at once reassured me, and proffered her hand.

"Yes," she said in answer to the unspoken question she probably read in my eyes, "I am happy to be able to tell you that my darling is making most satisfactory progress. But, of course, you must see her for yourself. We owe you much—my husband and I—Dr. Monkhouse; far more than we can ever repay. But come this way."

I followed her into the next room. Not long did it take me to satisfy myself that my patient had indeed made capital progress since I had seen her last, and I congratulated Mrs. Delamark accordingly.

"You yourself, however, are looking far from well," I added. "But you will presently be able to get out into the fresh air more than you have been in a position to do of late, and that of itself will doubtless benefit you. Still, I think I must persuade you to let me send you a tonic."

"We will talk about that another time," she replied a little hurriedly and with a somewhat forced smile.

It may have been only fancy on my part, but she seemed to me like one who was listening for the coming of someone or something, and whose sense of hearing was stretched to the utmost. Now that my assurances had satisfied her as to her daughter's improvement, it was clear that she was anxious for me to be gone. "I must apologise for my husband's absence," she went on to remark, "but some special business has called him from home."

To me it was a matter of no moment; indeed I was rather glad than otherwise that he was out of the way.

"When shall we see you again, Dr. Monkhouse?" she asked as I turned to go.

"I will send you some fresh medicine in the morning," I replied, "and will call in the course of the following day."

She saw me to the head of the stairs, and there we shook hands and parted. The sour-faced woman (I never learned her name) was waiting for me at the foot of the staircase in order to show me out and bolt the heavy door behind me. It was where she always waited for me, as though she was a sentinel on guard, charged to see the house rid of me at the earliest possible moment.

I was in the act of putting on my travelling cape preparatory to taking possession of my other belongings, when both the women and I were startled by a loud explosion somewhere inside the house, following upon which came two blood-curdling yells, one immediately after the other. Running from the rear of the hall was a corridor

with a green-baize door at the end of it, which in Squire Heyland's days, led to his favourite sitting-room, and it seemed to me as if both the explosion and the cries came from that direction. My cape dropped to the ground; but, as I sprang forward, the woman, who had divined my intention, did the same, and grasped me by the sleeve.

"You cannot go that way, sir," she cried. "You must not—you shall not!"

I did not answer her in words but thrust her aside—not too roughly, I trust—and hurried down the corridor.

In place of the green-baize door of other days, I now found one of stout oak, which, on trying, I found, to my dismay, was either locked or bolted on the inner side. Taking a coin from my pocket, I rapped with it smartly on the door, in almost immediate response to which, a bolt was shot back and the door flung wide. The sight that thereupon greeted me was indeed an amazing one.

But, first of all, my attention concentrated itself on the man who had unbolted the door, and who was standing just inside the room, an open hand pressed closely over either eye, his whole frame contorted with agony.

"Oh, Colonel, Colonel," he cried, "the spirit lamp exploded, and it has blinded me!"

Not being able to see, he evidently mistook me for his master.

"I am not your master, but Dr. Monkhouse," I replied. "Let me examine your eyes. Perhaps the injury may not be as bad as you imagine it to be."

In him I recognised a man whom I had encountered on various occasions when going my rounds, and whom I had known to be an inmate of Linden Lodge, but of the nature of whose duties I knew nothing. He had the torso of a big brawny man set on the short and bowed legs of a dwarf, which lent to his appearance a singularity that caused the majority of people whom he encountered out of doors to turn and stare after him when he had passed. His expression was that of a close, reserved man, and to me his mouth seemed indicative of great tenacity of purpose.

"What have I done?" he exclaimed, almost before I had finished speaking. "I mistook you for the Colonel, although I hadn't heard him come back. But go away, sir, at once, without losing a minute. You mustn't be found here. Never mind me, never mind me, but go at once!"

"Nonsense, man," I replied in my most peremptory tones. "I am certainly not going to leave you till I have examined your eyes, whether your master be pleased or displeased should he find me here."

Apparently the man was in such agony that he was powerless to make any further protest, so I led him towards the middle of the room, where, over an oblong oaken table, a lamp, pendant from the

ceiling, shed a brilliant light. As I did so I had time to look about me more particularly than I had been able to do, and then all at once, as in a flash, ignorant as I am of such things, I knew and recognised the place in which I found myself for what it was. I had unwittingly penetrated the secret of Linden Lodge.

I was in the den—for surely that is the proper name to give it—of a gang of bank-note forgers.

The evidences by which I was surrounded were too numerous and too unmistakable not to reveal, even to my inexperienced eyes, the nature of the nefarious business which was being secretly carried on in this locked-up room.

On a side-table were a couple of galvanic batteries, while on the floor near at hand stood a machine, the like of which I had never seen, but which I judged to be some kind of press. On the centre table lay several plates both of steel and copper, some of them partly engraved, others untouched, together with a variety of what I took to be graving tools of different kinds. No great distance away was a glass vessel half full of some liquid, probably either sulphuric acid or sulphate of copper. So much a hurried look round enabled me to note. Last of all my eyes took in several specimens of bank-notes, both English and foreign, but whether genuine or forged I could not tell, each pinned or screwed down, as it were, into a small framework composed of some white metal.

But filled though I was with amazement, not a word nor a sign escaped me in betrayal of what I felt. I had still hold of the injured man's arm, and I now turned his face to the light, and, bidding him remove his hands, I proceeded to examine his eyes with as much care as I would have done in my surgery at home. The fellow was trembling from head to foot, but whether owing to pain or fright, or the sudden shock to his nerves, I was unable to judge.

"You have frightened yourself unnecessarily," I said to him. "I will make you up a lotion with which to bathe your eyes, and it will be best for you to wear a light bandage over them for the next few days, after which——"

I got no further. There was a sound of hurrying footsteps in the passage outside, and an instant later the door was flung violently open and three men burst into the room. One of them was Colonel Delamark, the other two were strangers to me, and, as far as the momentary glimpse which was all I had of them allowed of my judging, foreigners. The Colonel and one of the others were carrying a revolver each, while the third man had a large travelling rug thrown over one arm. All three wore heavy overcoats, and mufflers round their throats, and looked as if they were either about to set out on a journey or had just returned from one.

At sight of me a chorus of objurgations burst from their lips, but in some language to me unknown. A second later, they had rushed upon me, and while one flung the rug over my head, and so blinded

me, another pinned my arms to my sides, while the third tripped my legs from under me. As I fell to the ground, there came a crashing blow on the back of my skull and I knew nothing more.

V.

WHEN I recovered consciousness it was to find myself reclined at full length on a sofa in a small but comfortably furnished room lighted by a couple of candles in stands over the chimney-piece. It took me some minutes to pull my wits together and bring to mind what had befallen me. Then, piecemeal, it all came back to me. My head ached horribly, but the thickness of the rug had broken the impact of the blow, and although I could scarcely bear the lightest touch on the spot where I had been struck, the skin, fortunately, was not broken.

I staggered to my feet and crossed to the door, only to find it, as I had felt nearly sure I should do, locked. Then to the windows, of which there were two, and both of them barred. Then I knew where I was. I was looked up in one of the rooms set apart by Squire Heyland for the use of his son when suffering from his intermittent fits of madness. On the table was a decanter half full of something, which proved to be brandy, together with a glass and a jug of water. A dose compounded of the two revived me considerably.

I went back to the sofa and sat down to consider my position. My watch told me that the time was half an hour after midnight.

That the predicament in which I now found myself was an exceedingly unpleasant one could not be disputed, and, judging from the treatment to which I had already been subjected, who could say that there might not be something still worse in store for me.

I had surprised the secret of a gang of desperate men who were evidently not used to stick at trifles. Might not my life itself be regarded by them as a trifle in comparison with what, as they doubtless believed, would happen to themselves if once they let me out of their hands! They could not keep me a prisoner for ever, and to them it might seem that there was only one way of effectually ensuring my silence. Dead men tell no tales.

Further, not even my housekeeper knew of my return; only two or three passengers, strangers to me, had alighted from the train by which I had travelled, and, so far as I could call to mind, I had encountered no one known to me in the course of my walk from the railway to Linden Lodge. Doubtless I was supposed to be still in London, and if it were destined that Sandyford should never see me again, my non-return would merely be set down as one more added to the long list of mysterious disappearances for which the great city has acquired such an unenviable reputation.

It was not a pleasant thought to force itself upon one, but when once it had taken possession of me it refused to be dislodged.

A deep silence seemed to reign throughout the house.

Once or twice I thought I heard the clash of a distant door, but I may have been mistaken. I lay down on the sofa, and spread my cape over me, for the night was somewhat chilly. It is scarcely needful to say that sleep did not come near me. And so the minutes lengthened themselves into hours, and the night wore slowly on—to me the most doleful and slow-footed night it has ever been my lot to spend. Few things are more trying, when a crisis comes in one's life, than incertitude with regard to what will happen next. The one thing I most longed for just then was that the worst, or the best, should be told me as speedily as possible.

Tiring of the sofa after a time, I took to pacing the room from end to end. Then, by-and-by, the candles burnt themselves down and sputtered out, and on drawing back the curtains of one of the windows I saw that the first faint tokens of coming dawn were already visible in the east.

Some little while after this I was startled by hearing the key turned softly in the lock of the door. I had heard no previous sound of footsteps, and as I turned on a sudden and faced the door a vertigo held me for a moment and everything swam before my eyes. Who was this that was trying to steal upon me unawares? Was my fate sealed—my last moment at hand? Although weaponless, I would not sell my life without a struggle.

The door opened, and, with a great gasp of relief, I saw that my visitor was none other than Mrs. Delamark. In one hand she carried a small shaded lamp, and as she advanced she laid a finger of the other hand on her lips. A dark dressing-robe swathed her from throat to feet; by that dim light her face looked as ghastly as that of a person newly dead.

Coming up to me, she said in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper :

"Follow me—the road is open for you. You are free. But first I must ask you to give me your solemn promise that no syllable about what you have seen under this roof to-night shall pass your lips. When once your word has been given, I know that I can trust you implicitly."

"But——" I began.

"Oh, do not hesitate—do not waste a moment!" she cried. "Cannot you understand that your life is in danger, and that if you throw away this opportunity another may not be granted you? My husband knows I am here and approves—but the others. No! They are desperate men, and neither he nor I can answer for what they may determine to do. If your life is dear to you, follow me without hesitation. But, first, your word."

"You have it," I said. "I will reveal to no one that which has come to my knowledge to-night."

"It is well. Come, then—and tread lightly."

With that she led the way from the room, I following. After traversing a corridor we came to a staircase, which I took to be one used by the domestics for obtaining access to the upper rooms. Not far from the foot of it was a side door which my guide, after giving me her lamp to hold, proceeded cautiously to unbolt. As soon as it was opened the fresh morning air blew coldly in, and the same moment Mrs. Delamark extinguished her lamp.

"Here is a pass-key with which to open the side door in the park wall, and so save you from calling up Dennis," she said. "When you have done with it leave it in the lock. And now, Dr. Monkhouse"—proffering her hand—"we must say good-bye. If you think it needful that Winnie should have any more medicine, perhaps you will send it to the lodge as before; but you yourself had better not come here any more. At the same time please send in your account, which shall be paid by return. But you have done that for me and mine which no money can repay. To you I owe it that my darling is still with me, and that is a service which I shall hold in grateful remembrance to my dying day. Farewell, and God bless you!"

VI.

THE morning was still so young when I reached my own door that I had to ring up Mrs. Gapp, my housekeeper, who had not yet arisen. She was unfeignedly surprised to see me at that hour.

"I sat up for you last night, sir, till long after the last train from London was due," she said; adding, in a slightly aggrieved tone: "I didn't know there was any train from there at this hour of the morning."

"Neither is there," was my reply. "I reached Sandyford last evening; but deeming it needful to call upon one of my patients on my way home, I was unavoidably detained all night. So now for your news, Mrs. Gapp, if you have any to tell me."

Of course, she could tell me nothing about my patients, whom Diprose had charge of, and her only item of news, if such it could be called, was to the effect that a "person"—she was careful not to commit herself by saying "a gentleman"—had called three times in the course of the previous day, and, while apparently very anxious to see me, had declined to state the nature of his business. "But most likely he'll be here again this morning, before you've done breakfast."

And, in point of fact, such proved to be the case. I had not quite finished breakfast when the stranger—a fresh coloured man of forty, who looked as if he might be a retired sergeant-major—was announced.

As soon as the door was shut on us, he introduced himself as

Inspector Towle of the Southampton Detective Force. I have no doubt that I looked the surprise I felt, little wotting what a much greater surprise was in store for me.

Having seated himself at my request, Mr. Towle proceeded to interrogate me. His first question was, had I a nephew, Mr. Tom Monkhouse by name; his second, had I, a few days before, seen that young man off at Waterloo Station on his way to Southampton to join the *Wandering Star*, bound for Natal; and the third, had I, on parting from him, made him a little present of one hundred pounds in bank-notes of five pounds each, all of which queries were answered by me in the affirmative.

Mr. Towle then proceeded to inform me that, a few hours before the *Wandering Star* was timed to start on her voyage, a defect in her machinery had come to light which necessitated a delay of two or three days, and that most of the passengers, including my nephew, had thereupon gone back on shore.

But the astounding part of his news was yet to come.

A few hours after re-landing, my nephew had been arrested, not merely on the charge of having attempted to pass a forged five-pound note in payment of a purchase made at a shop in the town, but also with having in his possession nineteen similar counterfeit notes.

"The young man's statement, Dr. Monkhouse," concluded the inspector, "is that the notes in question were a present from you to him at parting, a statement already confirmed by your own lips. Consequently, I must ask you to inform me when, how, and from whom the notes came into your keeping."

"That is very easily done," I replied, after a moment or two given to gulping down my amazement. "The notes—twenty of five pounds each—were handed to me across the counter of our local bank by Mr. Ivy, the chief cashier, in payment of one of my own cheques drawn on myself."

"Then our next step must be to interview Mr. Ivy. I have brought the notes with me, and no doubt he will be able to identify them."

"You wish me to accompany you?"

"That is essential."

It was my usual time for starting on my morning round, and while we had been talking, my gig—an old-fashioned vehicle, but one which I have never found in my heart to discard—had been brought to the door.

Ten minutes later the inspector and I were at the bank.

Rarely in my life have I been more dumbfounded than I was by Mr. Ivy's calm assertion that the notes produced by Towle were *not* those handed to me by him when he cashed my cheque for the hundred pounds. Not merely were those notes forged, but in no single instance did the number tally with that of any of the genuine notes received by me, as he proved by his register, or whatever the

book is called in which are recorded the numbers of the notes issued by the bank to its customers.

The inspector and I drove back to my house. I was in no humour for going my rounds with such an unsolved mystery hanging over me; indeed, I had my doubts whether Towle would have been willing to lose sight of me for so long a time; so Diprose, as he had already done for some days past, again took charge of my duties.

Towle looked at me, and I returned his gaze, as we sat down opposite each other in my consulting-room.

"It's clear to me, doctor," he began, "that you have been made the victim of a villainous trick on the part of somebody who has cleverly contrived to substitute his forged notes for your genuine ones. Now, are you quite sure, sir, that the notes were never out of your charge and keeping, even were it only for a matter of two or three minutes, between your receipt of them at the bank and your parting from them to your nephew? Think; consider. Of course you can see for yourself that the matter has assumed a very grave aspect as far as you are concerned."

I did think, I did consider, and but little cogitation was needed to bring to my mind the fact that, after leaving the bank, I drove round by Linden Lodge on my way to the station, that I deposited my hat and inverness cape in the hall prior to going upstairs to see my patient, and that the packet of notes was under the band of my pocket-book in an inner pocket of my cape. I was not gone more than ten minutes, and, to all appearance, I found my cape exactly as I had left it. But, in the lurid light of what had lately befallen me and with last night's strange discovery freshly in my mind, did it not seem abundantly clear that—

"Ah! I see that you have lighted on a clue," broke in Towle, with a chuckle. His observant eyes had detected a change in my expression. "Out with it, sir. Let us hear what it is."

Thus adjured, I proceeded to tell him that the only occasion on which the notes had been out of my own keeping was during the ten minutes spent by me in my patient's room at Linden Lodge.

"Hum. What sort of people are they at Linden Lodge? What do you know about them?"

It was an awkward question to answer, bearing in mind my promise to Mrs. Delamark. In what way was it possible to reconcile my recently acquired knowledge with that promise? There seemed to me only one way of doing so, and that was to treat my overnight experience as if it were nothing more than a dream, and confine myself to what I knew about the Lodge and its inmates prior to my departure for London, which was very little indeed.

Whether Towle noticed my momentary hesitation I cannot say. He had risen and crossed to the window and was standing with his back to me, gazing over the wire blind into the street, his hands buried deep in his pockets.

I had just begun my answer to his question when an ejaculation broke from his lips. Turning, he said: "Excuse me for a short time, will you, doctor. I've just seen somebody pass the window whom I know. Please to wait here for me. I shall not be gone more than three or four minutes." And he was off like a shot.

He was gone nearer twenty minutes than four, and when he returned he brought with him his friend of the street, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Kilpin of Scotland Yard. The latter was a dark, close-shaven, alert-looking man, rather under the medium height, who seemed unable to say a dozen words without smiling, and thereby bringing into prominence a faultless set of teeth. Doubtless, however, he could look stern enough on occasion.

When introductions were over, said Mr. Kilpin, addressing himself to me:

"My friend Towle has confided to me the particulars of the business which has brought him to Sandford, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the genuine notes obtained by you from the bank were exchanged for forged ones on the occasion of your visit to Linden Lodge when on your way to the railway station. You left your cape in the hall for a few minutes while you went upstairs, and that was when the exchange was effected. Further, I may tell you in confidence, doctor, that both the self-styled colonel and his house have been under close surveillance for several weeks past, and that at length we have obtained ample proof that Linden Lodge is the headquarters and rendezvous of a gang of international bank-note forgers, who for a considerable time past have set the authorities, both in this country and abroad, at defiance. We have been waiting awhile before taking action in the hope of being able to lay hands on some of the chiefs of the gang at one swoop. That time, I am happy to say, has now come. Klein and Brunowsky arrived from the Continent last night. To-night we purpose casting our net, and we hope to have a very pretty haul."

And a very pretty haul they had. Delamark was pounced upon at the Lodge, together with a couple of his underlings. The two foreigners were arrested at Ickfield railway station, with a large number of new notes in their possession. To all of them the law meted out punishment in due measure.

As to what became of Mrs. Delamark and her child, although I did not fail to make inquiry, I could learn nothing. They had both disappeared between the time of the police raid on the Lodge and the following morning, and no word concerning them has reached me from that day to the present.

THE LOST WILL.

BY ISABEL P. WHITFIELD.

"I HAVE no patience with Norman," cried Alicia, heiress and only child of Squire Travers, of Beechwood Hall. "I did all I could to persuade him to spend Christmas Day with us, but to no purpose. He said he 'must play the host to his guests.' Guests, indeed, a party of paupers I call them. I can't think how he can take pleasure in such low company."

Squire Travers made no reply, for he was fast asleep; but Alicia's cousin, Captain Melhuish, laughed, and said: "Did you tell Norman Vincent what you thought of his visitors?"

"I was not quite so foolish as that, Gerald; but when I am mistress of Deerhurst I will put an end to such a state of things. Fancy! he actually wanted me and papa to go and help to amuse them. I said we expected guests of our own, so I must reluctantly decline."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Captain. "And he believed you?"

"He always believes what I say."

"You would have been Mrs. Norman Vincent twelve months ago if his mother had not died so suddenly?"

"I suppose so," Alicia replied pettishly.

"You will excuse me, my fair cousin, but there seems to be very little in common between you and Mr. Vincent. Now, as I have often remarked before, you and I——"

"I *must* have a position. You are——"

"A pauper, I suppose?"

Alicia coloured and turned away. Just then the dinner-bell rang, and her father awoke. The fact was that Captain Melhuish had run through a very tolerable fortune in a few years. The turf and the gaming-tables had almost proved his ruin.

The master of Deerhurst stood before the roaring fire in the great dining-hall. Christmas Day was over, and his happy guests had retired to their respective sleeping-quarters. He had selected his company with some care. They were all persons who were too poor in this world's goods to invite him to their homes in return; a hard-worked city clerk with his wife and two daughters; a retired naval officer, who had lost his small fortune by the breaking of a bank, with his crippled sister; three poor gentlewomen who toiled hard to support themselves by means of their unappreciated talents, and two under-paid curates from a starving East End parish.

To all of these people Christmas week in the country, and at such a beautiful old mansion as Deerhurst, was a delight and a wonder. Their colourless lives were brightened up for once, and they were surprised at the sound of their own laughter.

Yes, all these people had retired to happy-dreams and slumber, while Norman Vincent kept vigil by his own fireside. He had missed his lady-love's presence that evening. She had smiled so winningly as she looked up into his honest grey eyes, and said how dearly she should have liked to be among them all, but that other duties forbade. And he, simple-hearted and unsuspecting of guile, had believed her. Yet he sighed; somehow he did not feel as he felt a year or two ago. His heart had widened; and instead of *one* love, he was ready to embrace the suffering and sorrowful in the whole world, to make their woes his own. What good he might do with his large fortune, he told himself. He had yet to learn that the greatest good is worked without money.

When his mother was alive he did all in his power to please her as became a dutiful son. She lived in the world, and cared for all its amusements. He resembled his father, who had died twenty long years ago, when Norman was but eight years old. He just remembered that studious, book-loving parent of his who lived most of his life in the old library, surrounded by his treasured volumes. Deerhurst had been purchased by his father's uncle, General Vincent, who had disinherited his own son, Henry, in consequence of his having angered him by making a love-match of which he, the General, disapproved. He had other views for his son. So he cut him off with the proverbial shilling, and left Deerhurst, with its grand old park and woods, to his nephew, George Vincent, Norman's father. The present owner of Deerhurst had heard these particulars before; also that the testy old General's son had died many years ago in obscurity.

Now, as Norman sat gazing thoughtfully into the heart of the glowing embers, he pondered upon the hard lot of Henry Vincent. The butler came in for his master's orders before retiring for the night. He had been footman in General Vincent's time, and was well versed in the family history.

"Can you tell me, Simmonds, whether General Vincent's son ever had any family?" his master asked, when the old man had put the last bar across the heavy shutters.

"Master Henry, sir? Why, yes, sir. I did hear that he had a daughter who died when a mere child; and there was a son, too, I believe."

"I shouldn't wonder, Simmonds, if you knew a vast deal more than that about them?" his master said, with a smile. "I ask because I should like to do them some good, if I could."

Simmonds brightened up, and said in a stammering sort of way:

"Well, sir, I have heard that poor Mr. Henry's son is not at all

well-to-do. A brother of mine lives near where they do, and he says, Thomas does, as Mr. Theodore Vincent—that's the son, sir—is in a clerk's place in the firm of Suttle and Keene, city merchants. He don't get much, sir, I believe. That's about all I know, sir." And Simmonds, waiting for a minute, but getting no reply, wished his master good-night and disappeared.

"A miserable city clerk! Good heavens! And I the possessor of Deerhurst! By legal right, yes, but not by moral. I must look him up. How he must hate my name!" Norman sighed, and then went off to bed; but he could not rest. When he fell asleep he saw the pale and scowling face of the old General as he was represented in full uniform in the picture that hung in the long gallery.

* * * * *

"Clerk wanted at once by Messrs. Suttle, Keene, and Co., merchants, Leadenhall Street. Hours 8 to 7.30.—Apply between 12 and 1, on the premises." Such was the advertisement read by Norman Vincent in his daily paper one morning about the end of January, as he sat over his breakfast in his rooms in London.

"Now," he thought, "I will find out something about Theodore Vincent." And, by-and-by, putting on a shabby and weather-soaked old suit of clothes he had thought of giving to some poor waif, he sallied out; then, pulling his soft hat over his eyes, he made for the offices of Suttle, Keene, and Co. Being early, but few applicants for the vacant post had as yet made their appearance. He was ushered into the presence of the chief of the firm, and explained that he wished to apply for the clerkship.

"We wish to find a person for a smaller salary than we are giving our second clerk, Mr. Vincent. He must leave, as we cannot afford such high wages. We offer fifteen shillings a week; Mr. Vincent has eighteen."

Just then a clerk came into the private room with some letters in his hand.

"Can't attend to you just now, Mr. Vincent; I am engaged."

Mr. Vincent hastily withdrew, after throwing a compassionate look upon Norman, who returned it, meanwhile scrutinising his relative closely. He appeared to be about forty-five years of age, haggard in the extreme, with a pale, refined face, and the dark grey eyes of the Vincent family. Norman traced a decided likeness in his features to those of the old General. His clothes were carefully mended in places, and brushed up to look their best.

After intimating that the salary was much too small for him, Norman took his leave of Mr. Suttle. It was now the clerk's dinner-hour, and Theodore Vincent came up to Norman, who said:

"You see, I was looking after the vacant situation in your office."

Theodore smiled sadly and shook his head.

"It is not vacant yet, but I am to leave as soon as they can get someone to take my post."

"And you?" Norman asked.

"Will get the sack. I have served them faithfully for some years, but they say I am ruining them. Eighteen shillings a week!"

"What are you going to do *then*?"

Theodore shook his head again.

"Heaven only knows; I shall tryⁱ for another situation. I went about one last night, but there were a hundred applicants for it!"

"It is terrible," cried Norman.

"I am sorry for you also, Mr. —?"

"Murray."

"Mr. Murray. You know, no doubt, as well as I do, what it is to be without the plainest necessities of life?"

Norman blushed and thought of his own beautiful Deerhurst, his dear old home.

"May I come and see you to-night?" he asked hastily. "I should like to have your counsel and experience."

Theodore hesitated.

"You may trust me," Norman said eagerly.

"I can see that, Mr. Murray," the other quietly said; "but I was thinking—— However, I shall be pleased if you will look in at my house to-night—No. 26, Queen's Cross Street, Pimlico."

"I shall not fail. Good-morning." And Norman Vincent walked homewards again.

"I don't think now that he would hate me if he knew who I was; but I shall keep the secret," he said to himself.

Before leaving that night for his cousin's house, Norman posted £20 in notes to Theodore, merely saying, "From a friend."

"He will get it in the morning, no doubt," he thought.

No. 26 was one of a row of small uncomfortable houses in a poor street. It appeared to be occupied by more than one family. The landlady showed Norman into a dingy back sitting-room. Theodore was at tea with his wife and two children, a boy and girl. He rose to welcome Norman.

"This is Mr. Murray, my dear," he said to his wife.

Mrs. Vincent then asked Norman to take a cup of tea with them. He observed an elderly lady seated in the only armchair the poorly-furnished room could boast.

"My mother lives with us," Theodore observed. This was the lady who had been the innocent cause of General Vincent's resentment. Her face wore one of the sweetest and most resigned expressions Norman had ever seen. She was evidently adored by her son and daughter-in-law.

"Mr. Murray is like us, mother, down on his luck just now." Norman blushed guiltily; but Theodore continued: "It is said that the darkest hour is that which comes before the dawning; we will hope that it may be so for us both."

The meal consisted of tea, with bread-and-butter of a doubtful

quality; there was nothing else, but they all seemed quite contented, and the children were well-behaved and refined-looking, like their father and grandmother. Theodore's wife had been a poor clergyman's daughter, and was evidently a gentlewoman; she appeared amiable and kind, but an expression of want and suffering dimmed her blue eyes. They all got quite friendly with Norman at last, his manner was so winning, and his tact so great. "The dear little mother," as Theodore called the old lady, tried to cheer them up.

"She is our good angel, Mr. Murray, and we couldn't live without her, bless her."

Rat—tat!—and a letter was brought in. Norman uncomfortably identified it in his own mind. Theodore opened it, transfixed.

"What is wrong, dear?" cried his wife.

"Theodore, speak!" his mother said anxiously.

Twenty pounds! Then there came a scene of wild delight and thankfulness that Norman never forgot. The pleasure of seeing them so happy was the greatest he had ever experienced in his life. What castles in the air they built! And all upon twenty pounds!

At last, when Norman rose and was about leaving the house, Theodore pushed a five-pound note into his hand, and whispered:

"Do not refuse; you want it badly, I am sure. And it will make me happier to think you have it." Norman turned away, his eyes filled with tears—he could hardly speak.

"No," he said at last, "you are *too* good. Keep the money, and may it bring you good fortune. Stay," he added, after a moment's thought, "I *will* take half-a-sovereign from you."

"Do," cried the other joyfully. "It was my last," producing one from his pocket. "And I hope, Mr. Murray, you will soon be happier. Come and see us again."

Norman Vincent went into a jeweller's shop, and had a hole bored in the half-sovereign, and a gold ring attached. He then hung it to his watch-guard. That coin and he will never part company as long as life lasts.

* * * * *

Squire Travers and his daughter were spending the evening at Deerhurst. It was Alicia's twenty-second birthday, and she and Norman had been busy arranging for their wedding. The Squire was now, as usual, fast asleep in an easy chair by the drawing-room fire. The young people were in the library.

"You must really have these chairs re-covered, Norman. I am sure they have not been done for a hundred years. Besides, I detest old things," Alicia said, as she looked discontentedly round.

"Everything here is just as the General left it, though my father added many new books. He almost lived in this room."

"Then I hope his son won't follow his example. You will have to take me to town every season. We must have a house in London. In fact, I intend to go to *everything* when I am married."

Norman did not reply. This was not the kind of life he had looked forward to. Alicia was growing more worldly every day; and he—well, he felt that there was a higher, nobler life worth striving after, which was hidden from the eyes of the ordinary man. He was beginning to dream about it, wondering whether his marriage would not shut him out for ever from that higher life, when he was aroused by a sudden half-scream from Alicia. He turned quickly. She was standing by the fire, holding a folded paper in her hand. The envelope from which she had just rent it was lying at her feet. Norman noticed seals upon it, and snatching it up, saw that it had contained the "Last Will and Testament" of General Vincent. Alicia was just in the act of throwing the manuscript into the fire, when Norman by one dexterous movement saved it.

"What do you mean, Alicia?" he asked, flushing hotly.

"I found it in the lining of that arm-chair. Give it to me! Let me burn it! Do you suppose that I will marry you if you part with one penny of your income, or if anyone tries to claim it?" she cried, turning fiercely upon him.

"You forget yourself. That paper is not your property, nor is it mine. Only, Alicia, I am afraid you love my income better than you do me," he added sadly, as he locked the offending document in his *escritoire*.

Alicia saw that she had gone too far, so came and clung to his arm. "Nonsense," she said; then caressingly: "Promise me, Norman, that you will destroy it, or, at least, that you will not take any notice of it."

"Trust me. I will do nothing rash. It may be only a worthless document, after all."

"Of course it is. Now, let us go back to papa. It is quite time that we went home."

Half-an-hour later Norman Vincent was reading the newly-discovered manuscript. Yes, it was a will made by the old General and witnessed of later date than that by which Norman's father became heir to the property. It revoked all previous wills, and re-instated Henry Vincent; the General leaving his son absolutely everything. And Norman? He opened the window and looked out over the grand old park sleeping in the moonlight of early spring. He saw the white deer steal timidly across the glade and then disappear in the dark shadows cast by the giant cedars. He heard the roar of the waterfall in the distant glen; while the faint scent of hyacinths and jonquils was borne in by the gentle breeze. He never knew till then how dearly how passionately he loved his home. Almost mechanically he turned, and seeking wax and a light, resealed the torn envelope containing the will, and replaced it in the *escritoire*.

A few weeks later Norman called at Beechwood. The Squire

was out, so he was ushered into the presence of Alicia. She received him coldly.

"There is no need of your telling me anything. I have heard of your mad folly in giving up Deerhurst. If you had allowed me to have my own way with that will, all would have been well. Papa is furious. But it does not matter so much now, as I am engaged to my cousin, Captain Melhuish. You will be pleased to hear that he has come into his Aunt Anne's property. There is your ring!" and she threw the engagement ring Norman had given her across the table. He quietly took it up, and dropped the shining circlet into the heart of the glowing fire; the rubies shot forth one deep crimson flash as he did so. Then he turned.

"I will wish you good-bye, Alicia," he said, still in the same quiet way; "and I hope you may be happy with the man you have chosen." With these words he left her, anger and mortification raging in her heart.

* * * * *

Deerhurst has a new master now. Theodore Vincent with his wife and children are as happy as people in such circumstances can well be. They are never tired of roaming about the old house and grounds, and wondering at the sudden turn in their fortunes. The business was all conducted through Norman's lawyers; and Theodore had much wished to share his newly-gotten wealth with his exiled cousin, but this offer had been generously declined; Norman stating that he had quite enough for all his wants. The "dear little mother," too, is surrounded by every comfort that wealth can bestow. She is serenely, quietly contented; her every wish gratified. Fifty long years of suffering and hardship have melted away like a cloud in the roseate light of the setting sun. They often talk of "Poor Murray," and wonder where he is, never having seen or heard from him again. Theodore had advertised for him in the daily papers, and had instituted every inquiry, but to no purpose.

Out in the world, where the sorrows and woes of humanity are deepest, Norman Vincent, or, as he is now called, "Brother Norman," labours. He has found his vocation at last. He does not belong to any religion, but to religion itself, and has found the path which leads to that higher life for which he has so often sighed; and in finding that, he has found the way of Peace.



IN MEMORY'S MIRROR.

A LITTLE curl'd head in the rectory pew,
 A young face glowing with boyish pride,
 A lancet of glass where the sun peers through
 From the great green world outside.
 There's a glimmer of sky 'twixt the wind-stirred trees,
 A swallow darts past upon wide-spread wings,
 And the child's thoughts float with the bird and the breeze
 'Mid dreams of wonderful things.
 The grave voice pleads from the pulpit high,
 The windows burn like a sheet of fire,
 And a great red admiral butterfly
 Flits over the drowsy Squire.
 There's a subtle fragrance of mignonette
 From the graveyard, tended with loving care,
 Like a mingling of hope with the sharp regret
 For those that are sleeping there.
 The clock in the belfry is chiming four,
 The rustic worshippers go their way,
 And the solemn organ uplifts once more
 A hymn for the dying day.
 And the boy treads lightly the echoing flags,
 And frets, as only a young heart can,
 That Life moves slowly and Time's foot lags
 Ere the child can put on the man.
 A soul that looks through a mist of tears,
 As one that straineth his eyes to see,
 And seeks far off in the shadowy years
 Himself as he used to be—
 An innocent self that he used to know
 Ere the seasons had rounded a double seven,
 And the marvellous earth was still a-glow
 With the mystical light of Heaven.
 The day is waning, the night draws near;
 The traveller, sighting the goal at last,
 Looks backward where memory mirrors clear
 The face of the vanished past.
 Oh, well for the soul that, 'mid life's loud din,
 It walked with raiment yet undefiled,
 That the heart of the man is still akin
 To the stainless heart of the child!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

